













**SHAKESPEARE**





# SHAKESPEARE

## *Five Lectures*

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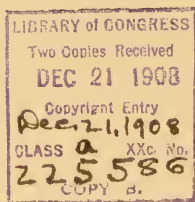
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~~Shakespeare~~

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## Preface

The following lectures are the result of occasional readings of Shakespeare extending through sixty years. The author is not at all a Shakespearean scholar. He has not given attention to discussions of the text nor taken much interest in special interpretations of peculiar passages. He has not even made himself familiar with all the minor characters of the different plays, but he has taken an almost life-long interest in the great passages, and in the acute, deft, liquid expressions scattered through the poet's compositions. He has also taken an interest in the man himself, sought to form an idea of his personality. The lectures are a collection and arrangement of notes and impressions dating from various readings on widely separated occasions.



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## **LECTURE FIRST**





# SHAKESPEARE

## I

### Memoir

#### EARLY LIFE AND WORK

**S**HAKESPEARE was a popular author and dramatist in his own day. His later reputation, however, is not simply the continuation of the judgment of his contemporaries. How is it that at the present time and for generations he has been accorded the first place in English literature? Of how many is this the independent judgment? If we could suppose his works to be a discovery of the present day, what would be the popular opinion concerning him? His writings consist so much of unrelated compositions that they are not easily compacted into a unity. His most brilliant passages are so isolated that they are liable to be passed unnoticed and in any case are not readily retained in memory by association. Then again the topics of which he treats are so varied and, to a superficial view, so common-place, that, as mere ob-

jects of thought, they excite but little interest. The more striking subjects of which he treats, like the stories of Hamlet, Macbeth and others, are so slightly historical that they do not call for serious investigation. Under these circumstances each admirer of Shakespeare must find in his writings something which pleases him personally. While such plays as *Lear* and *Tempest* make a profound impression as a whole, the general impression which they make is not their chief value as literary productions. Their manifold excellences are appreciated only by readers trained to notice and gather on the broad fields over which they roam the scattered passages that have intrinsic merit.

A fame attained both by incidental strokes of genius and prolonged exhibitions of power may well attract our attention. I bring forward first some biographical items.

### *Early Life*

It has often been said that of Shakespeare's life we know almost nothing. And this is true, if we mean by life external deeds. We often wish we could find in his own hand-writing some such assertion as

this: "When I was a boy I went up to Kenilworth to see a display of fire-works," or "On such a day I bought stock in the Globe Theatre," but no trace of a report about himself has ever been found. Still there are few men of whom we have more intimate knowledge. The working of his mind in the days of his maturity, if not laid open before us, is an object of successful investigation. Admirers of his genius have studied his writings with the utmost care, and by noting his words, forms of expression and various and changing tendencies of thought, have been able to bring into view very much of his career in the last thirty years of his life. His occupation, the most prominent portion of which was preparing plays to be enacted on the stage, disclosed from year to year the subjects to which he gave attention, and in some degree his personal feelings. Moreover his sonnets, if not an autobiography, must at least embrace experiences through which he passed in the joys and trials of life.

Shakespeare was born at Stratford upon Avon, on the twenty-third of April, 1564. He was the oldest of ten children. He attended such schools as the town afforded,

and acquired such knowledge as was imparted by them at that day. He was not in early life possessed of anything like literary culture, though he had some knowledge of Latin. There are indications that he was early employed in assisting his father in his business occupations, who is reported to have been a dealer in wool; also to have had a meat market. The father was a man in good standing as a citizen, was for a time a town officer, but later was unfortunate in financial affairs and became a bankrupt. The family thereby fell into straitened circumstances. In Sonnet 111 Shakespeare bewails the disadvantages under which he labored. Addressing a friend he says:

“O, for my sake do you with fortune chide

“The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,

“That did not better for my life provide

“Than public means, which public manners breeds.

“Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,

“And almost thence my nature is subdued

“To what it works in, like the dyer’s hand.”

### *Marriage—Leaves Stratford*

In December, 1582, when he was eighteen years old, he married Ann Hathaway, eight years older than himself. This was a freak of youthful folly and caused him life-long mortification. There are expres-

sions in his plays which show that regret and shame clung to him ever after. In May, 1583, his first child, Susanna, was born, and in 1585 his wife gave birth to a pair of twins, Hamnet and Judith. When he was twenty-one years old, then, he had a wife and three children to support. His father being reduced in fortune, it is not known that either the father or the son had any remunerative business. The tradition is that the son was irregular in his habits and associated with bad companions. He is reported to have poached upon the preserves of Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, a town near Stratford. After being prosecuted for his outlawry he composed a lampoon upon the owner of the property and affixed it to the gate of the park. This is supposed to have roused the anger of the country gentleman and to have made it necessary for the wayward youth to leave the region. There can be no doubt that he, at some time, fell into the meshes of the law,—a plight which he has immortalized in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, in the travesty of a trial before Justice Shallow.

Whatever may have been the occasion of his leaving Stratford, it is certain that

he went to London about 1585, and, probably, mainly for the purpose of acquiring a support for his family. Except on occasional visits,—regularly, it is believed, once a year, and of course for special occurrences, he was separated from his home for twenty-eight years, till 1613.

*Employed at Blackfriars Theatre*

On reaching London Shakespeare found his way very soon, perhaps at once, to Blackfriars theatre. Here he met a townsman, Thomas Green, by whose advice, probably, he resorted to that city. Here he early found employment, at first, it is understood, of a humble kind. He must have been ready to accept anything remunerative, for he was in sore need. He seems, moreover, to have turned over a new leaf as the result of the discipline he had undergone. He must have adopted habits of thrift for he became a man of property within ten years, and ultimately, like another sharp financier among literary men, Voltaire, a man of wealth and free expenditures. But this was from small beginnings. The report, without much confirmation, is that he began his theatrical career with holding horses for

those who had come to witness the plays. Being a sprightly young man, facile in movement, of fair proportions, with dark auburn hair and hazel eyes,—so the report goes,—he was soon called in to help in shifting scenes and drawing curtains.

### *Apprenticeship*

Of course an intellect like his could not remain unrecognized. Huxley said of Gladstone, with whom he had very little kinship in intellectual tendencies, that if he were thrown down alone upon a barren Scotch heath, it would be but little time before he would be known as the first intellect in Britain. Shakespeare would in any place shine as a star by his own inherent brilliancy. It was soon found that he was a good prompter while the acting was in progress; then he was found to be apt in suggesting changes or amendments;—not an uncommon thing, as the plays were the property of the company. He was undoubtedly soon called in to take a minor part or to fill a gap. In all this he was modest, set a humble estimate upon his powers, considered himself an imitator of those who had already acquired fame; especially he looked up to Marlowe as a model and a



master. It is generally believed that in Marlowe, but for his untimely death, Shakespeare might have found a rival in the estimate of later generations.

His apprenticeship was a long one. Brandes says there was no definite trace of him till 1592, seven years after his arrival in London. But it is understood that he wrote plays wholly his own, before that time,—plays that he re-touched before they were acted. There is no doubt that these seven years were years industriously spent in self-education. It is believed that he understood Italian, perhaps French. He may have acquired a knowledge of these languages during this period. We know from outside evidence that before 1592 he had already made his mark upon the inner circle of habitues of the theatre. This is evident from an onslaught upon him by Robert Greene. Mabie says: Greene, Marlowe and Nash seemed to hold the stage when Shakespeare appeared. Greene, who died in 1592, jealous of the fame of this country bumpkin, wrote to his friends charging them not to trust Shakespeare because of his literary dishonesty, calling him an upstart crow, beautifying himself with our feathers, with his



tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, an absolute Johannes factotum, thinking himself the only shake-scene in the country. This attack excited general indignation. Henry Chettle, who published Greene's note, denied its truthfulness, declared the accused "to be civil, excellent in quality, upright, honest, possessed of a facetious grace in writing." There was ground for saying, not reproachfully, that he beautified himself with the feathers of others that was the habit of the time and the profession. He did not claim as his own what did not belong to him, but used what had been given out to the public when it answered his purpose. He had no pride in his originality, but wrote to please his audience. He availed himself, as a legitimate means of attracting attention, to a remarkable degree, of legends, traditions, happy expressions that fell under his notice. Pope said of him:

"For gain, not fame, he winged his roving flight,  
"And grew immortal in his own despite."

Yet what he appropriated he made his own by giving it life and popular currency. Lowell says:

"We call a thing his in the long run  
"Who utters it clearest and best."

We have now followed the poet through his youth, which we will say closed when he was thirty years of age, in 1594. He began sober work late and we will allow him a somewhat prolonged youth. Instead of following him now through the years of his maturity, we will turn back to see what his literary work had been up to this point. He had been associated with others in revamping old plays, perhaps had attempted independent work while he was acquiring his skill as an actor. But we are interested now in his unquestioned work. First we notice his pre-dramatic productions.

The *Passionate Pilgrim* and *A Lover's Complaint* have their merits but are overshadowed by other works. The three poems *Venus and Adonis*, *Rape of Lucrece* and the sonnets have more than five thousand lines, as much in amount as five books of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The *Venus and Adonis* he dedicated to Southampton, as the first heir of his invention. It was published in 1593, when the poet was twenty-nine years old. The *Rape of Lucrece* came out in the following year. These poems may have been written, probably were, at a somewhat earlier date. It is to be presumed that they lay before him, open for

correction and enlargement, for months, perhaps years. They bear the marks of youth but as fully illustrate the exuberance of the author's fancy as his later productions.

Shakespeare was, we may probably say as a boy, intoxicated by that old myth that represents the primal tragedy of humanity. Feminine admiration adoration of independent, generous, brave masculinity is one of the elementary facts of human nature. Not long since a woman accounting for the sad career of a gifted young man said: "First it must be remembered that all femininity was at his feet." Shakespeare in his latest play makes Miranda on emerging from her seclusion exclaim: "How goodly mankind is." Our author began life overwhelmingly impressed with this trait in the human family. The Venus and Adonis portrays the ardent devotion of a sensitive and impressionable nature to a beautiful courageous personality glorying in its abounding strength. And it leads on to the foredoomed result, the well known outcome of nature, the crushing of hope and ambition by a death which results from brutal violence. The efflorescence of humanity trod-

den into the dust by the cruel on-goings of nature has ever been a theme at once fascinating and depressing to the thinking world. On this the youthful poet wrote *con amore*. The Rape of Lucrece is a poetical rendering of the old Roman story.

I include, as I have stated, the sonnets in the list of youthful and pre-dramatic poems. It is true that they were published when the author was forty-five years of age, but I think they had long been in existence and express sentiments connected with his initial experiences in London life. He had no hand in their publication, so far as is known. They were given to the press by their possessor, probably for selfish reasons, perhaps with hostile intent. They have been long and carefully studied by Samuel Butler and he gives them an early date. In presenting the early life of the poet, then, they have a place, and whatever is to be said of them may come here. They are a memoir of thought rather than action, but are indispensable to a full view of the man.

They number one hundred fifty-four. Together they contain about one-half the amount of one of the longer dramas. But because of their enigmatical character and,

at times, expression of personal feeling, whether of the author or not, they have wakened much curiosity and painstaking study. They were first published in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe, dedicated to W. H., who is designated as their only begetter. Whether this means that he procured them, or called them into existence as the person addressed, is uncertain. They begin with an address to a young man of great beauty, urging him to marry, that his marked excellences may be carried down to the coming generations. Seventeen sonnets are devoted to advice of this kind, repeated and enforced in every form and with utmost emphasis. More than a hundred sonnets follow addressed apparently to the same person in which charges of wrong and confessions of wrong, alienations and reconciliations are recorded: that is, alluded to, obscurely indicated, in poetical terms that need shrewd interpretation.

After these follow sonnets addressed to or relating to a dark lady, with whom he had tribulations that manifest at once the poet's weakness and sense of duty. It will aid us to a correct view of the sonnets and all Shakepeare's works, to notice, by the

way, a state of society in the Elizabethan age and in subsequent reigns, not openly tolerated in our day. It would be assumed that a man in Shakespeare's circumstances would have a mistress and live a life of pleasure. The Court of King James was lax in morals, gallants of that and succeeding royal administrations would have been ashamed not to have on their hands intrigues and amours that would keep up court scandal. It would be difficult to maintain a high-toned morality when the nobility of a kingdom was enlarged by the illegitimate children of the king. We are not to be surprised therefore that Shakespeare had alliances that brought him trouble. When we remember the man, that of all men he most clearly understood humanity in its beauties and deformities, remember that the human race develops itself in social relations and that its most commendable qualities are affection, kindly associations for help and mutual support, admiration and love culminating in marriage and family life, we can comprehend the range of his thoughts. From this starting point his comedies and tragedies grew and took form. By reason of his personal endowments friendships were in-

evitable. He had his boon companions, his genial associates, his feminine admirations. I think, he felt that coming from the country he was raw in manners and must imitate city ways and form city associations, I give this as my opinion simply derived from appearances. He is acknowledged to have made some of the dramatists models for a time. I think he looked with a youthful awe upon those who had seen courtly life. He sought to be intimate with W. H. a handsome boy or youth, to cultivate a friendship that has been compared to that of David and Jonathan. He flattered this young man, desired to be with him, asserted his devotion to him over and over, till, at this distance he seems to have been absurdly obsequious in his attempts at familiarity. Again Shakespeare lacked iron in the blood. He fell under the notice of a dark lady who fascinated him. She was not handsome, indeed to a critical eye coarse in feature, but he could not resist her basilisk eye, and was bewitched by the music which she could draw from instruments at her command. Between these two persons he had a sorry experience. W. H. was frivolous and roguish, the woman



heartless and treacherous. The boy beguiled the poet's mistress, she was false to her vows, but was soon scorned by her new lover and became again the enchanter of the poet. He was racked with shame and remorse but for a time, at least, unable to resist his temptress. All these experiences he wrote down in the sonnets, with tedious repetition, with many clumsy expressions, yet with many lines of exquisite beauty and inspiring poetic imagery. These sonnets he must have sent to W. H. in intervals of friendly confidence, as letters intended to retain his allegiance and foster continued familiarity. In the course of time W. H. published them and opened to the world the secret workings of the poet's heart.

Shakespeare was forty-five when the sonnets were published, but I think they were the product of his earlier days and that he had long outgrown the follies they commemorate. His later plays indicate a manliness and self-control that win the respect, and, under the circumstances, the admiration of his readers.

The sonnets remain an enigma. The view I have presented seems to me the best that has fallen under my observation, and co-



incides with my impressions as I have read them.

As a specimen of other views I notice that of Park Goodwin. He thought they were written from time to time on tablets and thrown into a drawer and after a time published without any regard for order. Godwin studied them with great care, wrote them out in prose as he understood them, and put them in the order in which they were written, as he believed.

He began with one introductory, followed with nine independent ones; in the next sixteen he found a plea for poetic art; a description of a young love-time followed in the next thirty-seven; the episode of the dark lady occupies thirty-seven; the closing fifty set forth the author's communion with the higher muse.

Godwin's prolonged study and great critical ability entitle his theory to consideration, but it seems to me too ideal. Of all men Shakespeare was the most difficult to adjust to a theory.

It may be worth while to say, that not attempting an exhaustive classification of them I have set some, as specimens, under descriptive designations,—terms and numbers as follows,—Hard circumstances

of early life, 1; Homesick, 5; Rivals, 6; Melancholy, 1; Self-confidence, (writings eternal), 4; Depressed but hopeful, 4; Enthralled, 2; Life worthless, 1; Despair, 2; Lovesick, 6; Confession 2; True love, 3; Virtue slandered, 1; Betrayed and robbed, 6.

It is painful to pass in review these items of the poet's early life, but they were the schooling for his later labors. Without them we should not have had Lear and Hamlet. What he experienced in his own personal trials he saw besetting humanity at large. The slow but fine grinding of the mills of the gods continued so long as his appointed work compelled him to identify himself with his fellow creatures.

There are some plays clustering about the period between 1591 and 1594 which may come under consideration with the pre-dramatic poems. At this time the poet was practicing his art for the sake of the practice. Professor Baker, of Harvard University, calls it the period of experimentation in plotting.

In the period of discipline are to be placed the following plays: Love's Labor's Lost; The Two Gentlemen of Verona;

Titus Adronicus and the Comedy of Errors; also, in an early form at least, Romeo and Juliet.

How shall we estimate the man at this stage of his career? Professor Baker says of his productions, they were promising but not extraordinary, that Love's Labor's Lost was weak in technique, i. e. in structure as a whole, and that Shakespeare's phrases and sentiments show that his mind was saturated with the writings of John Lyly, a popular dramatist of the day. Similar criticisms are made by this author of the other plays of the period. His disparaging estimate of the early plays would be modified by most of the admirers of the poet. Goldwin Smith finds in Love's Labor's Lost expressions characteristic of the poet's mind. His disapproval of inflicting pain upon animals is thus set forth:

“As I for praise alone now seek to spill  
The poor deer's blood, that my heart means no ill.”

And in praise of woman we find in the same play this:

“From woman's eyes this doctrine I derive,  
“They are the ground, the books, the academes  
“From whence doth spring the true Promethean fire.”

Romeo and Juliet is considered to belong to this period of experimentation. But, if so, it also opens the period of maturity. Brandes considered it Shakespeare's first independent tragedy;—a love poem, the apotheosis of passion, immeasurably above anything else of the kind. There is no doubt that he improved from year to year in marshalling his material, and in adjusting the parts of a play in due proportions, but this play is considered evidence that he had already, in a good degree, acquired a mastery of his art.

We will give it special attention to ascertain what Shakespeare was at thirty.

It is impossible to fix any date when he ceased writing narrative poems and began to write dramas. The two kinds of composition undoubtedly overlapped. He would surely try his hand at work for the stage before taking the responsibility of furnishing finished plays. We may, however, take Romeo and Juliet as his first composition characteristic of his work for the theatre in a business-like way. It is believed to have been written in 1591, revised and enlarged in 1594. The author was then thirty years of age. So far as it discloses his personal feelings it

shows us the man at his transition from youth to manhood.

The play is based upon an Italian story which had already been made available for the stage. A quarrel between two prominent families of Verona, the Montagus and the Capulets, agitated the town. Adherents of the houses and family friends took part in the quarrel and the people were divided into hostile parties. Street brawls frequently disturbed the peace of the city. Notwithstanding these bitter differences Romeo, a handsome young man, fell desperately in love with Juliet, the two being of different parties. Juliet returned his love, and her affection and devotion are the dominant element of the play. The wakening of her spirit to a longing for response from a kindred spirit, the thirst for recognition, her satisfaction in the lover who sought her as a bride, are portrayed with a wealth of statement and subtleness of description unsurpassed, not to be surpassed in language. The garden scene, in which Romeo, having scaled a supposedly impassible barrier, has found access to the Capulet mansion, and the dialogue with Juliet at the window above are famous the world over. Two lovers talk-

ing two hundred lines of poetry across a space that separates an aristocratic sleeping room from the ground, in language that can never grow old, is a picture to be left to Shakespeare.

Our aim here is not to describe the play but to get a view of the author. That "true love does not run smooth" is graphically delineated, but the deaths of the lovers are more romantic than like events in later tragedies. The violent deaths in partisan quarrels, (of which there are three), are more chivalric, less repulsive than those in *Lear* and *Othello*. The poet manifests the same tendency to premonition and to foreboding that became noticeable in after years, and the same sense of dependence upon an overruling power, Romeo, approaching the Capulet festivity, where he was to see Juliet, of whom he had never heard, already in love with Rosaline, as he supposed, but not an accepted lover, says:

"For my mind misgives,  
"Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars  
"Shall bitterly begin his fearful fate  
"With this night's revels; and expire the term  
"Of a despised life, closed in my breast,  
"By some vile forfeit of untimely death;  
"But he that hath the steerage of my course  
"Direct my sail."

Other passages expressive of the same sentiment occur in the play. The poet exhibits also the same wealth of charnel-house imaginings that is found elsewhere in his writings. Juliet destined by her parents to be the wife of Paris, rejects this arrangement and prefers the following alternative:

“Bid me lurk

“Where serpents are; chain me with roaring bears;  
“Or shut me nightly in a charnel house,  
“O’er-covered quite with dead men’s rattling bones;  
“With reeky shanks; and yellow chapless skulls;  
“Things that to hear them told have made me tremble,  
“And I will do it without fear or doubt,  
“To live an unstained wife to my sweet love.”

The opposition that Juliet had had to encounter is manifest from her father’s speech. He was determined that his daughter should marry Paris on the coming Thursday. She thanked him for his care for her but refused to fulfil the appointment he had made. He says to her

“How now! how now, Chop-logic! what is this?  
“Proud, and I thank you, and I thank you not;  
“And yet not proud; Mistress minion, you,  
“Thank me no thanking, nor proud me no pouds,  
“But settle your fine joints ’gainst Thursday next,  
“To go with Paris to St. Peters Church  
“Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither.”

The poet, though following an old story exhibits his power of invention in this play. He introduces two characters of prominence not elsewhere connected with the narrative. Juliet's nurse contributes much to the diversion of the audience, and Mercutio is almost as much an original as Falstaff. A gay and careless young aristocrat, he can talk without stopping to think, and plays with the same equanimity with airy nothings and the fatal wound stealthily inflicted on him by an enemy.

We shall find in the end that the wearied Shakespeare of fifty was the buoyant Shakespeare of thirty. We follow farther, and to the end, his life and work in another lecture.



## LECTURE SECOND



## II

### Memoir.

#### LATER LIFE AND WORK

**I**N following Shakespeare to his maturity, we have not reached the highest development of his manhood. At thirty years of age one is expected to be already engaged in the serious work of life. What account can we give of his succeeding years? Twenty-two years are still before him, how is he to fill them? Unfortunately but few items have come down to us which have reference to his business and social occupations. Such as we have are connected with his closing years and may be noticed later. There is, however, a vast amount of literary labor spread out before us which discloses the subject of his thoughts and to some extent the drift of his mental development. His work is definitely known. In mature life he was a dramatist and he was nothing else. The theatre, however, opens to observation the entire range of human experience. His work of the period now under review consists of

thirty-seven dramas. Some of them were written before the year to which *Romeo and Juliet* is assigned, 1594, but they were retouched and may all be considered as belonging to this second period, after his advance from the position of poet to that of poet and dramatist. These plays fall into groups, and belong with some definiteness to different periods of his life. Of those that centre about the year 1594 the most noted are the plays already mentioned as belonging to the period of experimentation, to which may be added *Mid-Summer Night's Dream*. These exhibit the playful young man. Their author is trying to see what he can do. He was not sure that he should succeed in taking a place by the side of Marlowe and Nash. He was like the young author who sends an article to the newspaper under a pseudonym, to see if he shall have a reader. Shakespeare was indeed already an author of repute, but he was attempting the playwright. These plays are not fantastic, the author had a solid basis to work upon, but in two of them the playful accessories give them their character, and they all excite interest by their incidents and extravagances rather than as works

of art. One of them, *Love's Labor's Lost*, excites an additional interest by bringing forward the question: What was the author's relation to Euphuism? Euphuism was an affected, pompous, pedantic style of speech cultivated in the days of Queen Elizabeth. It was considered a mark of high standing in society. The term was derived from a work of the dramatist John Lyly, entitled *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit*. The book was written in the Euphuistic style. This method of speech is supposed to have enlarged somewhat the range of the English language. Shakespeare uses a superabundance of words, some of which were never in general use. Hence it is asked, was he a Euphuist? Ridiculous as this method of speech now seems, it was popular for a time. Queen Elizabeth was an adept in it. In *Love's Labor's Lost* one character, Don Armado, a fantastical Spaniard, set off by his page, Moth, blurts out his sounding words intended to overawe the audience. As an illustration we may take these words addressed to the King: "Great deputy, the welkin's viceroy and sole dominator of Navarre, my soul's earth's god, and body's fostering

patron." What the introduction of this character indicates has been a matter of debate. Moulton thinks Shakespeare was at heart a Euphuist. Dowden says against pedantic learning, he directed the light artillery of his wit. Another author thinks the part of Don Armado is a pitiless satire on Euphuism. It is certain that Shakespeare took pleasure in a broad vocabulary, but no one will accuse him of bombast.

It will give us some facility in apprehending the life of the author to speak of his plays in groups. One of the groups most distinctly marked is The Chronicle plays. They follow immediately upon those already noticed, to some extent mingled with them. Baker succinctly states the facts concerning these plays: "Ten of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays are chronicle histories in the strict sense of the word. Three more are drawn from English legendary history. Three others are founded on the history of two other nations. That is, roughly speaking, one-quarter of Shakespeare's work is chronicle play, and nearly one-half of it has its source in the histories." The ten founded on veritable English history are, the three

parts of Henry VI, Richard III, Richard II, King John, two parts of Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VIII. These are mentioned in the order of their composition. The first of these is assigned to 1592, the last but one, that is Henry V, to 1598. Henry VIII belongs to a later time, and is a composite production, much of it from the hand of John Fletcher. This play was not written with the same aim as the other nine relating to England.

There was a period of about fifteen years when popular audiences were delighted with English story. Queen Elizabeth, coming to the throne in 1558 was beset by manifold dangers and most trying duties. By 1585 the government had become master of the situation. In 1587 the intrigues over Mary, Queen of Scots, subsided with her death, in 1588 the Spanish Armada was annihilated, and the country entered on a period of national pride as well as prosperity. Dramatists found their account in glorifying England before the people. Professor Baker says: "Indeed I think it may be said that between 1588 and 1598 the Chronicle play was the most popular kind of play in England. The pages of Henslow's diary certainly

show that all the leading dramatists, at one time or another within that decade, tried their hands on this kind of work—Greene, Peele, Marlow, Dekker, Jonson, Shakespeare.”.....He adds, “It (the Chronicle play) was trained in the freest of all schools, that of the only national drama England then had,—the miracle plays and the moralities.” The people, however, soon desired more amusing exhibitions, and there was little of the strictly historic brought upon the stage after 1600. Shakespeare’s work in this department brought out some of his finest literary passages and gave free play to his powers of invention. The account of Cardinal Beaufort’s death is the most appalling picture to be found in Shakespeare. There are passages of deepest pathos in King John, and stirring exhibitions of moral and mental struggle in Richard III. In Henry IV we have comic exhibitions of soldier life and that unique character, the bibulous, lying braggart and wit, Falstaff. These plays, of little value in furnishing accurate information in minute affairs, are in outline truthful and instructive. They also constitute a grand gallery of portraiture. In their more serious and



passion-stirring portions they prepared the mind of the author for his great tragedies. The two plays based on Roman history, Julius Cæsar and Anthony and Cleopatra, tragedies of great power and abiding value, were not intended to be prominently historical narratives.

The decade devoted prominently to the Chronicle plays, from 1590-1600, was an important one in Shakespeare's life. At its opening he had been five years in London. His Stratford life and education had not opened to him broad views of the world. London lifted him from provincialism, Blackfriars made him acquainted, to some extent, with social life and with the nobility of England. Before the decade closed he had become a good actor and had with his theatrical company visited many of the country towns of England. He had seen the places of historic interest and had doubtless visited the scenes of contest where the fate of his country had been decided. In accord with the habit of the times he had studied English history. His taste and imagination led him to reproduce the past. Only one of his plays, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, represents scenes of his own day.

He became interested in the events and actors that gave character to his native land. He brought scene after scene from the olden time before his contemporaries.

He began his historic representations with events connected directly or indirectly with the War of the Roses,—a period extending through thirty-five or forty years and closing about eight years before the poet's birth. While he aimed at portraying character rather than teaching political wisdom, he impressed upon his hearers the horrors of civil war, the desolating and impoverishing effects of an internal strife that sweeps away the leaders of the people and robs the soil of its laborers. From the civil wars he reached backward a hundred and fifty years and brought before the eyes of his generation the intrigues, cruelties, murders that accompanied the old-time graspings after power. He portrayed the heroic and glorious achievements of the wars with France, as well as the final defeats and disasters that followed. He stretched his vision eastward also and garnished his pages with the aspirations of those who sought to rescue the lands trodden by "the feet nailed for our advantage to the bitter cross."

Views like these enlarged the dramatist's thoughts, confirmed in him principles of truth and righteousness as well as inculcated upon him those sound sentiments of law and order that he carried through life.

We may properly connect with these chronicle plays that of *Julius Cæsar*, written only two years after *Henry V.* The majesty of Britain may have led him to think of the majesty of Rome. He was in advance of his age in apprehending the character of Cæsar. He was fascinated by the foremost man of all this world. It was consonant with his spirit to mark the portents of nature witnessed in the streets of Rome ere the mighty Julius fell. He judged of Anthony and Cicero more acutely than many later historians. It was in accordance with his conservative principles that he should show favor to Brutus, but he was not blind to the motives of the conspirators. On the whole, this passage of Roman history seems to me to have been an open book to Shakespeare, and that he read it not only with profit to himself but to the world.

We get a good glimpse of the author's mental progress by a look at the *Merchant of Venice*, written in the midst

of the chronicle plays. There is an atmosphere around it that is suggestive. It is ascribed to 1596. At this time the author was at the height of his hopes and prospects. It seems to me the most easy and nonchalant of his productions. It has no special purpose, no moral bearing. It is the overflowing of a mind that is more than full. It is true, it contains the famous passage asserting the humanity of the Jew. "Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" It would seem as if the poet was about to rebuke the bitter, savage prejudice against the Hebrew race, but no such result follows. The patines of bright gold and the celestial harmonies are declared to be perceived through the quickening influences of love, but these add nothing to the substance of the play. The author is throwing off a masterly production for the stage—the stage and nothing else. The last act, where the moral aim should be emphasized, if there were one, is simply a means of closing up a story in a way to gratify curiosity. But if we look at the author we see him in his strength. He carries forward four or more stories in

harmonious development, in clear narrative yet with co-operative blending; he brings upon the stage the gentleman, wealthy, generous, serene under supposed losses, still a firm friend to an attached adherent; he brings before us the grasping, revengeful Jew, and he portrays a court in which justice is administered with sharp practice. All these things he manages with the ease of a master. The play seems to me to manifest the author's calm, modest enjoyment of power and position as favorably as any of his productions.

Historic plays must after a time become monotonous. The people desired to be amused. Shakespeare's motto must have included, if it did not consist of the phrase "to please." He was connected with a company and must seek their advantage as well as his own. He had shares in the Globe theatre, begun in 1593, and he must make the stock valuable. He set himself therefore to work of another kind. He invoked the playful muse of earlier days. With the wit of *Comedy of Errors* he combined the elegance and wisdom of an advanced culture. We have at the opening of the seventeenth century a group, less defined than the chronicle

group, of plays known as High Comedy. In the years following 1599 he produced the three most popular plays of this kind: *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare had now come to know the relations of his art to the English people. He understood the tastes and desires of his fellow-citizens, and felt himself possessed of the power to gratify them. Baker says: he had learned that they liked a good story. He had learned to carry the story through, to proportion the parts, to interlard agreeable sentiments and amusing incidents, and to dismiss his audience with a fitting denouement. Baker's expression is: he had acquired mastery of the plot and of technique.

Admirers of Shakespeare often prefer reading here and there in these comedies to the study of the great tragedies. They afford more amusement and cause less pain. They abound in gaiety and frolicsome wit, the daring banter of spruce young men and the sharp repartee of girls in their teens. To give continuity and an air of fact to the story there are evolutions of love that excite interest, waken curiosity, play upon the hearer's fears, threaten

catastrophe, but finally reach a happy solution. There is one character, however, in "As You Like It," the melancholy Jaques, who gives a kind of pre-intimation of the sad and tragic thoughts soon to be evolved in later productions. He indulges in a melancholy which he says is his own, not like any other, compounded of many simples, that enwraps him in a humorous sadness. He stands out in effective contrast with the frivolity and buffoonery of some of the other characters. I shall refer to these plays at another time.

The decade between 1600 and 1610 was for Shakespeare a trying one and gives us our most penetrating view of his life. Within that period he wrote his great tragedies. For some reason he turned his thoughts to most gloomy and harrowing topics, year after year. He had found that his power lay in treating them, but that made them none the less themes to agitate the spirit. And his ability to treat them with great effect was in the fact that he could be agitated by them. There was a kinship between his soul and tragic themes. Those who have studied the man and his work at this time think they find marks of excruciating experiences. I do not pretend to



see anything concealed from common view, but I can see that the poet must have passed the time under deep shadow. We are to bear in mind that he was able, beyond most men, to put himself in the place of another. He could reproduce and make his own the feelings of a Macbeth or a Desdemona and put them in a living form. That was his genius. That is what is meant when it is said, "He understood human nature." His greatness was in his capacity for sympathy. Though the great tragedies appeared within a period of about eight years, he must have been brooding over them for fully ten years. We can imagine how Hamlet clung to his mind night and day, till he almost thought he was Hamlet himself. It was a long-continued work to write one of these tragedies, the author must have returned day after day for months to the dreaded theme. We can imagine living all summer now Hamlet, now Polonius, now the uncle, then Ophelia and the guilty Queen. What a bed of torture must home-retreat have been! He had but recently been reproducing Julius Cæsar, what a depressing contrast must his Hamlet have been! To go from the original *facile princeps* to the timid,



doubting irresolute laggard, drooping under too heavy a burden must have been a lesson on human weakness. Yet Shakespeare knew that he was himself more a Hamlet than a Cæsar. The poet was a kind of medium through which the weak and wicked, the perplexed and conscience-smitten made themselves known to the world.

This capacity of losing himself in another was the source of his power. Up to the production of Hamlet he had been a dramatist among dramatists, one of a company of peers of like if not equal standing. Suddenly he developed a power that probably astonished himself. His resources unrolled themselves with a freedom and reach that surprised everybody. He now left all rivalry in the rear. This and a few kindred plays are not only specimens but landmarks in literary productions. Devoted admirers of the poet have spent years in attempts to comprehend and display their contents,—contents open and hidden—but no exposition can do them justice. They address us through soul-communications too subtle for words. It seems to me that in Hamlet Shakespeare, for the first time, actuated by the exuberance of

his powers, was pushed on to over-production and encumbered his play with unnecessary material.

Measure for Measure, ascribed to 1603, reveals a settled conviction of the poet's mind. It comes between Hamlet and the trilogy of great tragedies usually associated with it. It has been described as pessimistic, and certainly it does not exhibit any great hopefulness as an experiment in the exercise of power committed to new hands. But I think there are underlying sentiments that disclose increasing tendencies in the author's mind more distinctly than any positive assertions. The moral of the play takes two directions—one in favor of geniality, the other against Pharasaic righteousness. One sentiment approaches the doctrine that love is the fulfilling of the law. The dramatist would show that kindness secures the ends of justice as surely as precision in enforcing the statute. He makes the strict unswerving ruler as liable to temptation as the one more genial in the interpretation of his duties. It is thought by some to be an assault upon Puritanism when he makes the man in power, who renounces any choice but to enforce the law,

corrupt and cruel when himself proved guilty.

The play holds a substantial place among the author's productions, though the denouement brings into service some subterfuges that are not pleasing to modern taste nor consonant with the most refined morals.

The three tragedies that are associated with Hamlet, that is Macbeth, Othello and Lear, are ascribed to the years 1604 and 1605. They required, in a still more intensified form, the feeling which imparted to Hamlet its ever living pathos. It is not necessary to follow the author through each play, for no new mental element could be added where the utmost energy conceivable had already been put to service.

In the man Macbeth we have a display of ambition set on fire by supernatural agencies, further influenced by a most unscrupulous creature, his wife. In the play Othello we have what Macaulay said was, perhaps, the greatest of literary compositions. We have a man without moral training, driven to fury by the satanic wiles of a cunning enemy, choking to death a delicate innocent woman, his wife.

Lear is one long agony. We have a revelry of crime in its basest and meanest forms set off by virtues simply sufficient to make a contrast.

How Shakespeare could have survived two years of personating in living sympathy, Iago and Desdemona, Lear and Gloucester, Goneril and Regan, Duncan and Banquo with their murderers repels attempt at explanation.

The tragedies specially known as such were not Shakespeare's final work. If they disclose to some extent the state of the author's mind, there followed others similarly indicative,—indicative of some degree of mental relief. If Hamlet's struggles and increasing gloom, if the note of woe rumbling through Lear and Othello tell us of a depressed Shakespeare, there are plays written after 1608 which assure us that his buoyancy of spirit was somewhat restored, that his vivacity of imagination knew no abatement.

He was now forty-four years of age, was in the fulness of his strength. Some ambitions he had renounced, some wounds time had healed. He rallied his energies anew and turned them to less painful themes. The theatre with which he was connected

still made demands upon his pen. He prepared for the stage four plays wholly his own and some others, notably *Henry VIII*, with the co-operation of others. He emerged, however, gradually from somber themes. The first production of this period seems to have been *Coriolanus*. He puts into the mouth of the proud old Roman of uncertain date, the bitterest denunciation of the common people and portrays him as giving way, under severe provocation, to the most unworthy passions. But the play has powerful passages and is not repulsive as presented to an audience. It has been often brought upon the stage.

*Cymbeline* is ascribed to 1610. Though there is blood-shedding in the enactment, it is after the feelings of hearer or reader have been dulled, while Shakespeare's favorite sentiment, that blood will tell, has been impressed upon him. Two royal youths, unconscious of their own descent and concealed in a wild rural retreat from infancy, manifest their high birth by deeds of valor and by their noble bearing. Notwithstanding the fiercest accusations against woman and against man, in the end virtually withdrawn, the graceful style, happy descriptions and genial sentiments

make the play a favorite with cultivated readers.

Winter's Tale is ascribed to 1611. It resembles Cymbeline in some of its incidents, but is a distinct, independent production. It excited some ridicule among the author's contemporaries by its blunders in geography, but as a drama exhibits his power of happy combination. His mellowed sentiment is described in the following comment of an editor: "Shakespeare has, in this play, finely depicted the evils that accrue by the hasty entertainment of that deadly enemy to social and friendly intercourse, *jealousy*, nor has he been less careful to show the utility of a patient forbearance in the conduct of Polixenes and Hermione."

But the Tempest is the consummate flower of Shakespeare's plays. He nowhere shows his true self,—the self that nature made,—at better advantage. He drops all brooding over the evils of society, does not allow himself to be irritated by wrongs that he cannot amend, and takes his place with his fellow-men, accepting things as they are. With a full sense of freedom he gives unconstrained play to the powers that distinguish him from

others,—other poets even. He gathers up the reports of surprising and grotesque experiences through which voyagers to newly discovered countries had passed, he summons spirits from the air to wheel about him and do his bidding, he calls up from the earth monsters to perform for him servile labors, and with the ease of a magician through these works his will. He weaves a story that grows and spreads and sweeps in the doings of men and women, fosters love, suppresses wrong and sets us down in a world of his own making. For power of description, for originality of conception, for free range in the supernatural, for mastery over the delicate and the monstrous alike, this play seems to me nowhere equalled.

With the *Tempest* his work for the world was finished. This play was written, it is supposed, in 1613. The poet was only forty-nine years old, and it would seem that he might have produced still more of dramatic compositions, such as he had before thrown off with marvellous rapidity. His last work showed that his visions did not flit less palpably before him than in former times, but it is not known that he engaged in any later liter-



ary labors. The Globe Theatre was burnt in the year the *Tempest* was written. He has not told us whether or not he had manuscripts burnt in it. He does not seem to have collected his works to prepare them for publication. It was left for John Heminge and Henry Condell, self-moved, so far as we know, to gather and publish them, seven years after his death. This has been, by some enthusiast, said to be the greatest service to the world ever rendered by any two men. We wonder how the poet spent his three remaining years. He must have been conscious of possessing extraordinary powers; but did he think his responsibility for them had been discharged? and did he fall back into easy ways, call himself, as in his younger days, Will Shakespeare or simply Will? or did he fret himself over his lawsuits and mourn over the degeneracy of the times? We wish he had told us. He had many things to remember from his childhood school days at Stratford to his return from London to his old home, the prince of dramatists. I am inclined to think he did not much recall the past but settled into an easy indifference, felt as all great men do, that he had not done much, and that the



world would go on without him as it had gone with him. In any case I feel sure that the closing years of his life were serene and happy. If he was appointed by the Divine Ruler to portray in immortal verse the weaknesses of our nature, the tragic elements that underlie human development, his destiny allowed him a peaceful evening of life, the cheer and support of friends down to the hour of his departure. From a happy and fortunate wedding celebration in his own house he passed after a few weeks to the repose of the grave. He sleeps beneath the parish church of his own Stratford upon the Avon.



## LECTURE THIRD



### III.

#### SHAKESPEARE AS A SERVANT OF HIS GENERATION

**O**NE of our hymns begins with these lines:

“A charge to keep I have,  
“A calling to fulfill.”

Dr. Horace Bushnell once announced as the subject of his sermon: “Every man’s life a plan of God.” The apostle Paul said: “For none of us liveth to himself.” As all men are alike before God this divine appointment may be extended to every one. A child may be by divine appointment a guide to its parents or an instructor of its teacher. Services like these are private or confined within a limited range. It is the privilege of some to promote the general good, to be so widely useful as to fall into vital relations to vast numbers, perhaps entire communities. We cannot conceive of a higher achievement than to deserve the gratitude of all men. The universality with which Shakespeare is recognized as a benefactor gives him a place well-nigh unique. Whether we consider him the product of the age in which he lived, or the selected

agent of the world's Providential Ruler, that he stands out before the race as a conspicuous object of observation admits of no doubt. And it is to be noted that his message appeals to the common sense of mankind. He does not lecture as a professor of science or philosophy but as a man who knows human susceptibilities and human needs. Other men become conspicuous as he, but their teachings are not of so general applicability. Aristotle or Aquinas, Kant or Calvin may by many be regarded with deeper reverence than Shakespeare, but neither of them is welcomed equally by the humble reader and the profound thinker as he is.

It will aid us to a just view of the poet as a servant of his generation to notice first what he was not—

He was not a philosopher.

It was easy for him to seize upon general truths, fundamental truths, but he did not give his time to expounding them. He seems to have had very little taste for work of that kind. His mind occupied itself with concrete things, did not linger over abstractions. It has been said to be the function of philosophy to transform scattered thoughts into comprehensive

ideas;—to bring items of knowledge under unity of expression. Shakespeare compressed thought but it was by instinct not study. Few men have uttered so many phrases that have been caught up and repeated, but their value was in the vivid glow of his intuitions not in the expression of profound meditation. He has his glory but it is not that of the philosophers. His does not eclipse their's, their's does not eclipse his. Neither party envies the other. Each has equally enthusiastic admirers. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory."

He was not a theologian, though he lived in an eminently theological age. No one can read Hamlet without being convinced that Shakespeare was a man of deep religious emotions, yet their influence upon his character is nowhere made obvious. Widely different opinions have been entertained as to his views of the most prominent topics in theology. His expressions concerning God do not indicate habits of worship. Yet he must have been familiar with the theological questions rife in his time. Recounting the varied accomplish-

ments of his favorite character, Henry Fifth, he says:

“Hear him but reason in divinity,

“And all-admiring with an inward wish

“You would desire the king were made a prelate.”

It was only twenty-seven years after his death that the Westminster Assembly, the most profoundly theological gathering among English-speaking people, began its sessions. The thinking of England must have been saturated for two generations with the doctrines which it discussed, but Shakespeare gives no intimation of a personal interest in those topics that revolutionized the nation. He was fond of forms and traditional practices, he seems to have had a liking for priests, but aside from the outward show, the church seems to have taken no hold of him.

He was not a reformer.

He does not seem to have been interested in the amelioration of civil life. Beginning in his day was a movement among the people in opposition to tyranny, which has continued with increasing force to our time. The terms progressive, radical, philanthropist, socialist are familiar to us. Efforts were made, by the Puritans especially, to secure a recognition of the rights



of the common people, but for a time with little success. After much endurance the deceived, the persecuted sought refuge in foreign countries. Shakespeare refers to them only with ridicule. Brewster and Robinson were his contemporaries, but they and their friends had no share in his sympathies. He had no pre-vision of the future politics of England, of the career of Cromwell, seventeen years old when he died, of the execution of Charles I, to occur a third of a century after he was gone. He manifested no affiliation with Hampden and Pyne, none with that class of men to which Howard, Wilberforce, Lincoln belong. He stands out in unfavorable contrast with Milton, eight years his contemporary, only second to him as a poet, who espoused with great ardor the cause of human rights.

He was not a statesman.

This epithet designates, perhaps, the proudest position open to human attainment in secular life. To comprehend the significance of the state, the grades of social life, the legislation that will secure to all their rights, the policy that will best foster virtuous and suppress vicious citizenship, requires broad reach of thought,

patient reflection and sagacious judgment. Shakespeare lived when questions of state policy were widely and ardently discussed. The Puritan movement was bringing within its range such profound themes as the amount of reverence due to tradition, inherited authority and the rights of the people. Topics like these must have fallen under his notice and have been discussed within his hearing. There is no evidence that he was interested in them, he has left no opinion on record concerning them. He lived by the side of Bacon, the policy of Burleigh was of interest to all who were anxious for Protestant success, but no one knows what measures of state he approved. He was twenty-three years old when Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded, twenty-four when the Spanish Armada was destroyed, but there is no trace of anxiety or hope in reference to these events. Still there is abundant evidence that he admired England, its soil, its climate, its insular situation. There are expressions in the plays that probably indicate his pleasure in the defeat of its foes. The application of such passages is conjectural, and in any case relates to past achievements not to desired future attainments.

We turn from the negative to the positive. Having noticed what the poet was not, we ask what he was. The best answer I can give is, he was, as a man, the fullest general response to the times. The most sensitive soul in England, his mind the most delicate photographic plate then in the world, he showed England what she was. He was the nation's man, not a party man. He did much to anglicise England. Its burly strength needed to be curbed and trained, the rough surface needed polishing, the cheer of merry England needed refinement, self-conceit needed to be repressed. He was an epitome, or a compendium of England. He did not develop in sections, in parts, as an orator, as a statesman nor as a reformer, but as a whole man and that whole as an Englishman or England's man. What England has become by slow development he became in the lifetime of one man. He and England were alike, he was no better and no worse than the nation as a whole, both needed development, he led the way; both needed to attain to self-knowledge, he attained it in part, the state is still attaining it. The amazing thing is the amount of culture he

aided England to attain in the unfolding of its powers.

The world's history is sometimes called a web woven in the loom of time. A web consists of warp and woof. The warp may be considered the forth-putting of nature, the items of experience which we meet of necessity not of choice. The woof is that which is wrought into the web by human endeavor; it is that which enwraps the separate lines of the warp and fills its interstices. It completes a tissue which comes to have length and breadth. The woof is sometimes called the filling. This is the best term here. As a co-worker with nature Shakespeare's greatness consisted in the immense amount of filling which he had at hand. It was this and not the warp which gave him his reputation. Mabie, in his life of the poet, says: "In power of pure invention, of creating plots, situations and episodes, Shakespeare was inferior to many of his contemporaries; and if invention and originality were synonyms, as they are often taken to be, his rank would be below that of Jonson, Fletcher, Manton or Middleton." It is when commonplace events are thrown before him, or the deeds of great men, or

the items of mythical story, or the fantastical performance of beings of a nature diverse from ours, that the wealth of his intellect appears. His command of the material which he gathers to weave into the coarse rough fibre of the warp is the wonder of the world.

It would be impossible to recount the services which Shakespeare rendered to the people of England, co-operating with others indeed, but himself chief in the work, in elevating character and diffusing intelligence. The English were in his day, in times previous, in times following, fond of rough sports, found their pastime in roistering, violent amusements, in bear-baiting and other kindred hilarities. Among Bunyan's confessions of cursing and indulgence of appetite is his fondness for bell-ringing and dancing. He had in mind the coarse rustic dance upon the public common.

Shakespeare gratified while he mollified this taste by some of his earlier plays. The Comedy of Errors affords food for inextinguishable laughter. Taming the Shrew diverts one by its humorous absurdities. It does not teach lovers to quench their quarrels with kindness. That

was a family resort too advanced for the reign of Elizabeth, but it narrates a victory over female waywardness quite in advance of the discipline from stocks and bridles ready at hand, near the pump in the market place, for the scolding women of an incipient civilization.

Again the poet could cater to the love of ease. We delight to throw off care, forget our troubles, lounge in luxurious retreats. Our contemporaries have their Lotus clubs, their cottages by the lakes with their fishing boats at the wharf, their hunting camps in the mountain forest, Christian families escape the summer heats of cities by resorting to their castles of indolence in the country. Shakespeare has adapted himself to this taste.

In *Midsummer Night's Dream*, he has surpassed in imagination the realities of the most fastidious. He has prepared a scene of sportive frivolity for all time. Fairies and gnomes, the bewildered and the bewitched, deceivers and deceived together, enact their fantastic parts to amuse an audience by ever fresh surprises of absurdity. To this play belongs the honor of acquiring a permanent reputation through nonsense.

Shakespeare became the public and popular teacher of England, if we might take the word in the primitive sense, its school-master. This position he shared with others, but he was pre-eminent. In his day there were no newspapers, no schemes for popular education, no public libraries opened to the children, there was but scant communication between different sections of the country. The Elizabethan drama had been preceded by certain popular plays, known as miracle plays, passion plays, and such like names, by which the people had been entertained and somewhat instructed. The aim in these performances was to impress upon the people certain religious and moral principles. The facts of Christianity were illustrated, as in the present age, periodically, at Ober-Ammergau. It has been said that in this school Shakespeare was instructed. But while he could only have received suggestions from such performances he did much in return to instruct the people. His plays were enacted in the provinces as well as in the city, and he told his countrymen of the contests that had desolated England in civil strife.



He taught them to destest civil war and indeed all internal contentions. He gave glimpses of the history of Greece and Rome, but specially opened before the citizens of England the national traits, the peculiarities of different classes, the intrigues of popular leaders, the ambitions, defeats and successes of those in power. He displayed before the nobility the occupations, superstitions and amusements of rural life, and before the populace the pride, corruption and disappointments of court ambitions. To read even at this day the names his dramas bear is to get a glimpse,—broad and luminous glimpse,—of old England in its early history. The instruction which he gives is indeed indefinite as to details, but it is graphic, and truthful in its outlines.

He was the instructor of all English-speaking people in the use of their language. It has often been said: "If you would master English, study Shakespeare and the Bible." Up to his day, and long after his day, the counties of England had each its dialect and peculiar pronunciation. Though we have need of a glossary at times in reading our author his words are mostly the words understood and used in



Britain, America, India and Australia. The Bible in King James' translation, made five years before the poet's death, has been the most potent influence in moulding and preserving the English tongue. After it the master of sentences is Shakespeare. He unfolded the marvellous wealth of our speech. He displayed its capacity to portray the grand majestic scenes of life, to express the most subtle emotions, to catch and hold the most delicate shades of thought, to give wings to the meditations of the student. He must have studied words, have practiced combining and creating them, yet he was never overmastered by them.

His power as an author was not attained through schools. He was self-made, no man's disciple. He hung long over the pages of others, considered them adepts where he was weak, imitated them, but this he did to enlarge and strengthen himself. It was the discipline of his early authorship, culture only. He called no man master. As he attained maturity and became conscious of his own capacity, the outreach of his literary work was amazing. His range of subjects was like his range of words. His vocabulary contains fifteen

thousand words, that of Milton eight thousand. His forms of expression are manifold, his aptness of phrase at times seems superhuman.

The felicities of his style can only be ascribed to genius, they elude analysis and are too subtle for description. Still there are some qualities that may be readily apprehended and should not be passed over. He always faces his subject squarely, boldly, composedly. Whether he lays hewn stone to build a granite structure or blows feathers into the air, he is equally business-like in the operation. He sees no difficulties to shrink from, no heights to climb. He moves right forward on a dead level and reaches the goal without trying his breath. When he has reached the goal his work is done. He never interprets himself, the reader must do the interpreting. He is not a member of any Shakespeare club, his sayings are open to the world, his readers are welcome to anything they can get from them. Yet his writings are self-illuminating. His thoughts flow from a brain that is aglow, and are suffused with the light amid which they germinate. They proceed from a mind teeming with living forms of its own creation and partake of

the spirit that reigns within. While he has left some enigmas to be solved, his scenes and paragraphs, taken in their entirety, are clear and many of them impressively significant.

There is a proverb that the style is the man and it has much of truth, but it can not be said of Shakespeare, he is much more than his style. It is eminently true, however, that his style is like its author. It has the free, spontaneous, supple movement that belongs to the man. It does not show the careful polish that we find in Horace, yet it deftly meets the demands required of style as a form of expression. It is not a mosaic made of classic words chosen with perfect skill, like the style of Milton, yet it uniformly embodies thought as accurately as his. It does not always glide as smoothly as the lines of Pope, who has been said to have tuned the English language, but it has lines and phrases that cling to the memory, echo from the tongue and are repeated as coined thought, more numerous than any other author has produced. Shakespeare does not seem to have selected words from a mass as we find them in a dictionary, but they selected themselves, that is, from the hidden treas-

ury of speech in the author's mind the word akin to the thought sprang from its concealment and took its place in the poet's verse.

The rythm of the author's lines, without being artificial, is musical and characteristic of the man. In plays of which he is partially author his work has been detected and distinguished from that of others by the melody of the composition. His songs have attracted special attention by their sweet flow of liquid words. The dirge over the seemingly lifeless Cymbeline is an illustration:

“Fear no more the heat o’ the sun,  
“Nor the furious winter’s rages;  
“Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
“Home art gone, and ta’en thy wages;  
“Golden lads and girls all must,  
“As Chimney-sweepers, come to dust.”

The fundamentals of good rhetoric, perspicuity, energy and elegance pervade the author's writings as co-constituents of the substance. The latter two everywhere come into view. Such figures as metaphor, simile, emphatic repetition, cursory allusion came thronging at his bidding and made his text a thing of life. Prof. Strong quotes fourteen lines descriptive of Young

Harry and says: "Here are nine different similes, succeeding each other with such matchless freshness and beauty that they fairly dazzle us." It should be added that the poet is not satisfied with dazzling the reader or hearer, he aims to move the emotions and convince the intellect. With him style is not the man but the servant of the man.

Shakespeare entertained and inculcated sound views of social life. This is a cardinal point in estimating him. It is important to entertain right views of the initial combination of individuals into a community. Here we can judge of him only by inference. We might say he has not treated of this subject at all, and we might say he has treated of nothing else. We have noticed that he did not devote himself to any special method of serving his generation, but he did give his thoughts to a life-long study of humanity at large. Did he seek the good of humanity? or, more definitely, the good of the community as the primal form of humanity entering on its mission? The poet fascinated by cultivated social life was still loyal to humanity as it develops itself primarily. The early Christians had all things in common,

or established a commonalty. This does not sufficiently bring into service individual powers and peculiar gifts. Accordingly, common interests have been divided into sections, and we have governments, schools, denominations, clubs and corporations. But these, neither singly nor combined, embody all the social interests of humanity, yet all rest upon a humanity that is at once many and one. No greater service to civilization can be performed than to make this primitive combining force of the race promotive of a pure morality. It is an outgrowth of nature, not a product of will, yet may be modified by well-directed effort.

What estimate did Shakespeare entertain of this substratum of human society, this fundamental community? He has given, as has been remarked, no treatise on the subject, but the opinions he embraced are clear enough. He held that the family is the initial force that brings individuals into unity and harmony. He would have abhorred Plato's Republic, a scheme that feeds the mass at a common table where children do not know their parents, nor parents their children. He would have detested organizations like the Oneida Com-

munity and all those associations whose key-word is free, realized in free possessions, free love, and freedom from obligation. He found in admiration, attachment, affection among the young, between those of opposite sex, the starting point for setting, in Scripture phrase, "the solitary in families." In almost all his plays are characters avowedly in love; as Lorenzo in love with Jessica, Viola in love with the Duke, William in love with Audrey. In the bantering of lovers the poet had great delight. Some of his most characteristic passages are to be found in their timid, indirect approaches and affected misunderstandings or pretended indifference. The simulated war between Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing* will afford amusement to readers as long as human nature is true to itself. Broadly separated by utter disregard, pelting each other with jokes and sarcasms, casting glances over the shoulder as they utter their flings, they gradually approach each other and finally reveal the fact that under half-contemptuous slights they have all the time been desperately in love. A specimen of this chaffing is to be found in *As You Like It*. Rosalind says to Orlando:

“There are none of my uncle’s marks upon you: he taught me how to know a man in love.” “What were his marks?” asks Orlando. She replies: “A lean cheek, which you have not; a blue eye, and sunken, which you have not; an unquestionable spirit, (i. e. averse to conversation) which you have not; a beard neglected, which you have not. Then your hose should be ungartered, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbuttoned, your shoe untied, and everything about you demonstrating a careless desolation.”

All these love-passages in Shakespeare are only incidental, he is not satisfied with anything but honorable marriage. The happiness of lovers is consummated by wedlock.

True peace and repose in life are attained in the home and the family. Shakespeare labors long, plans artfully to gather the interest of his audience around the fulfilment of a vow that seemed in danger of being broken. He loves to see unfaithfulness defeated, endangered rights established. His love of justice is conspicuous, his desire to see the weak protected we recognize as inborn, he had an instinctive aversion to anything base or wanton.



It has been remarked by acute and broad-minded critics like Coleridge, that Shakespeare nowhere favors or even excuses wrong. He is never betrayed into a tolerance of folly, or cunning, or the artful over-reaching of others. He would have abhorred the claim that one may drive a bargain with the ignorant or unwary. He nowhere encourages crime by passing it over as the way of the world. He always frowns upon social disorder or any thing that mars the proprieties to be maintained in everyday life. I have no doubt that his own indiscretions prompted him to enforce such sentiments instead of seducing him into excuses for wrong-doing.

Such a position is the more remarkable from the fact, that he lived in an age when irregularities were expected in certain of the social classes, that he was on friendly terms with many not over-strict in their habits, and was himself less scrupulous in practice than in theory—if we may trust by-way inferences.

It is to be remarked that Shakespeare's view of the race, perhaps better here, of his nation, as a social unit, was an ideal one. The nation he addressed was not visible but was the spirit of the mass, the

substantial reality. He wrote and wrote., he talked and talked to the world not aimlessly, not hopelessly, but had an inner sense that there was value in it, that it was worth making better. He did not work on material that was mere emptiness, material which he had to hold up with one hand while he smote it to the ground with the other, but at bottom he was a serious-minded man and dealt with realities. He was neither a pessimist nor an optimist, but simply accepted realities. He did not, as a few do, look upon humanity when acting out itself, as perfect, an expression of God's glory. He did not embrace the democratic idea that the judgment of the mass will be found to be right, but he did believe it to be true enough to endure and to have the basis of improvement. He was willing to work for its good. On the other hand, he did not see perfection anywhere. He had no heroes. Carlyle could not have welcomed him as a fellow hero-worshipper. He does indeed make a kind of pet of Prince Hal, Falstaff's companion, but this was poetical. He did not make Henry V an object of reverence. It has been a matter of surprise that he has uttered no praise of the men

of genius with whom he was associated. They took notice of him, some of them bestowed flattering laudations upon him, but he is not known to have returned the favor. I suspect that, while he saw much to love and admire in humanity taken at its ultimate worth, he saw nothing great in it, nothing before which he could bow down in reverence.

Shakespeare of course served his generation in many ways, too many to be enumerated. Such a mind coming in contact with other leading, influential minds must have diffused sentiments and convictions that reached to the more intelligent population of London, even of England. The sweet, gentle, peace-loving bard must have been held in friendly esteem by many of his contemporaries.

These offices which it fell to him to fulfill made him a substantial and enduring power in the nation. To have gratified a people fond of sports while softening their manners, to have initiated them into their national traditions, to have awakened a spirit of patriotism, to have made their language a permanent power and an embodiment of thoughts that are an eternal possession, to have impressed upon

the people that the glory of a nation is in social order and civic righteousness, was to perform a work the length and breadth of which no man can measure. It requires a fit time when the nation is in a forming state and absorbs into its life the impressions made upon it; it requires a man whom God has foreordained to the service, whose will is overruled by divine decree.

## LECTURE FOURTH



#### IV.

#### SHAKESPEARE AS TRAGEDIAN

**S**HAKESPEARE is known by his tragedies rather than by his poems or comedies. They are not the most pleasing of his writings but are indisputably the most powerful. I have not in mind any very strict definition of the term tragedy, but mean by it a drama that issues in a sad and remediless catastrophe. The result reached is due to nature rather than mischance. It indicates a universal rather than a particular weakness, and Shakespeare has been spoken of often as an interpreter of humanity because he has brought to view its fundamental as well as individual traits.

We will notice first some of the circumstances which turned his thoughts to tragic themes, and then his treatment of such topics.

With all his vivacity he tended naturally to that which is somber and melancholy. In his earlier career he may be spoken of as the interpreter, perhaps better, the delineator of human life, but there followed a period in which he became the in-

terpreter of humanity itself. He adhered still to narrative, to actions attributed to men and women, but he dwelt on what *might be*, what *on occasions* is, rather than on the ordinary occurrences of human experience. What is human nature at bottom? seems to have been the question over which his mind was brooding. Here he took a depressing view of man's being and nature. He had always been sensitive to thoughts of decay and death. Turning back to clay was a repulsive picture to his mind, but lingered in his imagination against his will. Before middle life sentiments like these were rather floating suggestions, however, than controlling ideas. But as early as 1602, when he wrote Hamlet, somber if not melancholy ideas bore sway in his soul. Brandes, a Danish critic, an appreciative and admiring student of the poet, says of the play Measure for Measure: that it is pessimistic, and adds: "Shakespeare's melancholy increases, he broods over the problem of human existence, the prevalence of evil, the power of wickedness." His surroundings were depressing and aggravated the drooping of his spirits. The royal court was corrupt, the private life of those high in



authority disgraceful. Men of mark, justly or unjustly, suffered before the law. Raleigh was sent to the Tower in 1603, Essex beheaded in 1601. Under such circumstances and in such a state of mind the dramatist went on to fulfil his engagements with the theatre and wrote his great tragedies. In these he gave his views of man when he most unrestrainedly acts out himself.

His gentlemen, like Prospero, Bassanio, the Duke in *As You Like It*, are respected, honored, but not men of force. Especially noticeable is it that he has brought upon the stage no women of the highest character; some of them are smart, witty, resourceful, others are amiable, mild, attractive, still others are daring, defiant, reckless, but there is no Shunamite, no Deborah, no Mother in Israel, no oracle to stand beside the wise women of the German tribes.

These general facts and the tendencies of mind developed in the tragedies can to some extent be accounted for by the personal experiences manifested in a close study of his life.

While he did much for woman, he suffered much from her. Henry Ward

Beecher once said, on the question whether Shakespeare should be tolerated for popular reading, women owe more to him than to any other person for the advanced standing they hold in modern times. This may be questioned, but he certainly has thrown a fascination about the female character. This is due, in part, to his own personal susceptibility. He seems to have been very responsive to a woman's eyes. They are the creators of love. We only know life's value by encountering their piercing glance.

“For where is any author in the world,  
“Teaches such beauty as a woman's eye?”

But one extreme leads to another. Shakespeare, in his youthful enthusiasm, based the power and value of woman on this frail foundation, viz: the gleam and glow of her face radiant with the Promethean fire of her eyes. But he came to put another estimate on this power to fascinate the judgment and subdue the will. He felt in later experiences the degradations inflicted on one enslaved by feminine tyranny. After a time the victim of the charmer writhes in his helplessness, and delight is displaced by remorse. Close pen-

etrating students find in the poet's writings evidence that his admiration was at times turned into bitterness. A dark lady figures largely in the sonnets and an almost demoniac power is attributed to her. In sonnet 132 we find these lines:

“Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,  
“Knowing thy heart torments me with disdain,  
“Have put on black and loving mourners be  
“Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.”

In sonnet 141 we have this pitiful confession:

“In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes  
“For they in thee a thousand errors note,  
“But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise  
“Who in despite of view is pleased to dote.”

It is not known how far these sonnets are biographical; it is to be hoped not to a great extent. I am sure they are not wholly so, and express sentiments that he outgrew, but they express what he considered possible, what he had seen, doubtless what he had in part felt, and give us thus a trustworthy clue to his estimate of human nature.

In more definable ways he acquired a knowledge of the tragic in life. Perhaps he did not suffer defeats and disappointments beyond those of ordinary men, but

he was sensitive to an extreme degree, had an imagination to body forth possible evils, and labored under some personal weaknesses. We learn what he was and what view he took of life, by a careful reading of the tragedies, and specially by reading the sonnets, which disclose more pathetically than the dramas the tortures to which the soul is liable.

It is supposed that the complaint which he puts into the mouth of Hamlet is really his own, surely it is not what a prince and an heir to a throne would utter concerning himself, and must have risen from the poet's observation if not from his experience. It has a modern ring.

“For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
 “The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,  
 “The insolence of office, and the spurns  
 “That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
 “When he himself might his quietus make  
 “With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear  
 “To grunt and sweat under a weary life;  
 “But that the dread of something after death—  
 “The undiscovered country from whose bourne  
 “No traveller returns,—puzzles the will  
 “And makes us rather bear the ills we have  
 “Than fly to others that we know not of?”

Some of Shakespeare’s troubles are known to us. His son, Hamnet died in 1596, just as his prospect of founding a

family and estate was at its height. He had of course been wounded by the sneers and jeers of older dramatists who looked upon him as an upstart, though he made no response. As he rose in reputation he had rivals who annoyed him though he fell into no open contentions as Jonson did. His feelings in this regard are supposed to be expressed in some of the sonnets. 'Addressing a friend he says:

“When I alone did call upon thy aid  
“My verse alone had all thy gentle grace;  
“But now my gracious numbers are decayed  
“And my sick muse doth give another place.”

Again:

“Knowing a better spirit doth use your name  
“And in the praise thereof spends all his might  
“To make me tongue-ty’d, speaking of your fame.”

There are other sonnets pointedly alluding to some one trying to supplant him in his friend's estimation. Who the rival was is a question on which Shakespearians are not agreed. One treatise of considerable length was written to show that it was Chapman. He was the translator of Homer, and this work was at the time and is still highly esteemed, but there is no certainty that he was the person in the au-

thor's mind. There are two articles in the May and June numbers of Blackwood's Magazine of 1901, which are at least entertaining. The author, evidently an enthusiastic student of the sonnets, who reads a good deal between the lines, thinks he shows that the rival was Samuel Daniel.

Sonnet 78, the first of a series in which the author pours out his grief to the friend who has apparently forsaken him, begins thus:

“So oft have I invoked thee for my muse  
“And found such fair assistance in my verse  
“As every alien pen hath got my use  
“And under thee their praise disperse.”

Whose was the alien pen? Drop D from Daniel, transpose the remaining letters and you have alien. The Essayist does a good deal of work of this kind in his article,—all with a certain degree of plausibility. He says, that when Spenser died in 1598 Shakespeare desired the office of poet laureate which then became vacant, but Daniel received the appointment. And his defeat was made the more bitter by the fact that Pembroke, whom he counted his friend, recommended Daniel. The Essayist supposed that Pembroke was the

person addressed in the sonnets. Whatever may be true in this particular matter, there can be no doubt that the poet's support from the nobility fell away at this time. Essex was beheaded, Southampton was banished, Pembroke (though there is some doubt as to his relations to Shakespeare) is believed by many to have been heartless towards an old friend and even treacherous.

Shakespeare was vexed also that other, and, as he thought, inferior, theatrical companies were preferred to his own. This is evident from the instruction to the players introduced into one of the scenes of *Hamlet*,—a rather awkward device by which he could tell a London audience what he thought of them. He also had lawsuits on his hands of which the results are not known. Jonson seems to have ridiculed some of his expressions and inaccuracies of statement. Jonson was however his staunch and generous friend, a fact the more noteworthy since he had much the advantage in learning. We see here enough to show us that he knew something of the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune, something of the pangs of despised love, something of the law's delay.

Some of his admirers have thought they penetrated to a deeper depth than this. Those who have delved with loving zeal in search of the real Shakespeare, who have read between the lines and beneath the lines, who have caught glimpses of the heart in its inmost action, think they have found evidence of experiences more serious than such trials as befall ordinary humanity. They think that the agitation of his soul over his own lapses, and a profound brooding over the great problems of life brought down this rare spirit to the depths of agony.

The abject confessions of the sonnets, their contrition, their self-condemnation are thought to indicate a personal experience of fearful despondency. It is believed that his feelings at times went quite beyond misanthropy to a disgust of the world, a hatred of it, a denunciation of it that amounts almost to cursing. These words of Lear are considered too elaborate, too intellectual, for an old, broken, distracted sufferer:

“You sulphurous and thought-executing fires  
“Vaunt couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
“Singe my white head! and thou all-shaking thunder  
“Strike flat the thick rotundity of the world.”



The following from *Timon of Athens* is a more direct assertion of the same sentiment:

“All is oblique;  
“There’s nothing level in our cursed natures,  
“But direct villiany. Therefore be abhorred  
“All feasts, societies and throngs of men.  
“His semblable, yes, himself, *Timon* disdains,  
“Destruction fang mankind.”

It seems as if these utterances went beyond the demands of the plays themselves, but no one can tell just where *Lear* and *Timon* end and *Shakespeare* begins. It is certain, however, that in thought, if not in personality, *Shakespeare* pervades it all. Professor *Walter Raleigh* of Oxford says: ‘In the tragedies he faces the mystery and cruelty of human life.’ ‘A profound sense of fate underlies all his tragedies.’ ‘We cannot even guess at the experiences which may have left their mark on the darkest of his writings.’ ” It is admitted that his later plays exhibit a more calm and equable state of mind than that manifested in the years extending from the production of *Hamlet* to that of *Anthony and Cleopatra*. *Raleigh* says: “We know that only a man of extraordinary strength and serenity of temper could have emerged from such experiences.”

We come now to notice some of the tragic representations of humanity which the poet actually put before the world.

The fate of Shylock seems to me tragic, though not actually irremediable of itself, only in the current sentiment of the day. That he should be crushed because of his race was no less woeful than the death of Lear or Macbeth. That he should be given over to pitiless abuse and insult without sympathy from a fellow-creature beyond those suffering with him, seems to me depressing humanity to the level of the brutes. That this cruelty to the descendants of Abraham should be justified on the ground of their descent seems to me a sentiment unworthy of Shakespeare, yet it was the popular view on which he brings the tragedy before the world. Doubtless public opinion justified it and, as to the persecutors, the dramatist read humanity aright.

The doom of Romeo and Juliet is tragic. But the result is not so horrifying, not so depressing, as in some other dramas. The tender interest in the affectionate child and enamoured youth kindles a deep desire for their success and happiness, moves one to tears over their defeat, but the issue

seems ordered by nature, perhaps a beneficent nature. There is no element of worldly success entering into the character of either of the lovers, failure is natural to them. Their death reconciles the hostile families, the Montagus and the Capulets, but their prolonged life would have afforded increased cause of contention. It was better to carry their loves to another world and to be remembered tenderly in this, than to live under restraint and to meet by stealth without home or a sense of safety.

Still the world will always mourn over them. It seems fated that the world will not treat kindly such tender affection. We could wish that the currents of life would carry the innocent and unthinking ones across unruffled seas to the final haven of blessedness, but that is not the sentence of the Supreme Judge—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." We admire Romeo's strength and endurance, but Shakespeare has not attributed to either of the lovers the wisdom that secures success in this world.

Hamlet seems to me like a diversified landscape on canvas. It represents the general life of man by an intensified in-

stance. It is like the wearing out of a family line by continual attrition. In any community the leading names change rapidly. If scattered members of a household retain the name, it is with new surroundings, not often is a family mansion held firmly under the same auspices from generation to generation. Hamlet, as a drama, seems to me to represent a long, painful grind by which a household is worn down to non-existence. When Hamlet dies there is nothing left. Nothing extraordinary happens to the family, as portrayed on the stage, except dense accumulation,—the events might occur anywhere. There is, of course, an intensifying of purpose and action,—that is necessary in compressing protracted experiences into a brief show,—but the occurrences might all have been private and concealed. Murders, disappointments, thwarted love, ghostly frights are happening continually. The only extraordinary element is Hamlet himself—the man of high position, high endowment, under overwhelming duties. With infinite resolutions and dallyings, amid countless besetments and temptations, attracted and repelled by feminine charms and feminine weaknesses, suffering tortures under disgraces and too

weak to strike the decisive blow, he drags out a dismal existence, in which like a decaying family he slowly turns to dust. The tragic issue is reached before he falls a victim to the poisoned dagger. The man has vanished before he dies, he falls an object of pity not respect.

In this drama Shakespeare seems to me to have interpreted humanity with a most wonderful penetration into its nature.

There is one episode in the play which I cannot pass by. The soliloquy of Hamlet's uncle, the murderer, seems to me its most pathetic passage. It reveals, I think, a brooding of the poet's mind over a deep problem of human destiny. The guilty man confesses that his offence is rank, a brother's murder. He queries, how he shall rid himself of the condemnation that follows guilt. Will repentance make him an innocent man? Will it secure even pardon from a righteous judge? But in any case can the guilty repent? Is he not at the last precisely what he was when he committed the crime? Repentance is a change of the soul's tendency; does the guilty man abhor himself or does he only dread consequences? Can a man cease loving what he loves by nature? Is a sin-

ner doomed to be himself? Can he cease to be what he is? The soliloquist and the dramatist left the question unsettled.

Macbeth is a comment on the text that one sinner destroys much good. Though he has accomplices, a wife not less guilty than himself, and assassins ready to do anything they are paid for, he is the central force that sets the machinery in motion. Suddenly a kingdom is in an uproar, a king murdered with disregard of the sacred laws of hospitality, his attendants accused of the murder, portents fill the air, a vague terror seizes upon the people, an old man says:

“Threescore and ten I can remember well,

“Within the volume of which time I have seen

“Hours dreadful, and things strange; but this sore  
night

“Hath trifled former knowings.”

The citizens flee for safety, officers of the government are puzzled, distracted, uncertainty reign everywhere. After a time it is known that Macbeth committed the murder and has usurped royal authority. Shakespeare has brought before the world a man trusted, honored, faithful to his king, successful in the discharge of important duties, by nature so possessed of

“the milk of human kindness” that his wife feared he would flinch when violent action was demanded. This man he has brought forward as the bloodiest of murderers. An old companion and friend says over him “this butcher.” Ambition within, not known to others, not acknowledged by himself, has eaten out all the better qualities of soul and left him the incarnate greed for power. Breaking away from restraint he murders right and left, pretending innocence all the time, he is dazed by ghostly visitations and overwhelmed by the consciousness of defeat. Lady Macbeth equally guilty with her husband and more eager for power can hide away from her associates, can conceal her woe in her waking hours, but in sleep-walking is crushed between the upper and nether mill-stone, alternately urging her husband to kill the king and washing the blood from her own hands.

Unusual space is given in this play to witches, ghosts and goddesses, and they have a decisive influence upon its outcome. I suppose the dramatist considered them fair and just personifications of irrepressible suggestions and fears that spring up in the soul. In modern philosophy they

would be said to be revelations from the sub-consciousness. In none of the author's plays does Nemesis more promptly work out her mission. Macbeth is slain in battle, his wife dies by her own hand. Shakespeare has seen fit to bring murderers on the stage with Macbeth, whether to exhibit humanity at its vilest, or to cast reproach upon corrupt government is uncertain. Macbeth asks them if they are ready to do thorough work, one of them replies:

“I am one, my liege,  
“Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world  
“Have so incensed, that I am reckless what  
“I do, to spite the world.”

The most intense wickedness portrayed by Shakespeare is found in Othello. What promised to be an apotheosis of marriage became a woeful wreck. A Moorish soldier who had passed through fearful dangers and hair-breadth escapes, has by his enormous strength, skill and power of endurance won a commanding position, has opened to himself households of culture and become a centre of interest to wondering listeners. A young woman, the daughter of a senator, is fascinated by his heroic deeds. She loses herself in admira-



tion of the brave adventurer. Against the will of friends and the sneers of the young fops at the sooty complexion of the Moor, she turns from others and makes him the object of her adoration. As was natural the stalwart man of arms is entranced by the young woman who had been nurtured in the lap of ease, indulged in every luxury and was a stranger to anything rough or unseemly. Without stopping to weigh consequences they are acknowledged lovers and soon married. It would seem that this romantic union would be without a jar. One was generous in his superabundant strength and glad to gratify every desire of his bride,—the other happy to entrust everything to the generosity and tenderness of her husband. What could mar the satisfaction they should have in each other for a lifetime? But the soldier unused to society is easily imposed upon, easily made the victim of cunning wiles. An enemy convinces him, with flimsy evidence, of the infidelity of his wife. In his fury, racked at once by love and a sense of wounded honor, too much enraged to sift evidence or listen to protestations he strangles his wife and ends a life of innocence and confiding trust.

What crime could be more horrible than this? Shakespeare has nowhere shown his resources more markedly than in mitigating the indignation of reader or hearer over this awful deed.

The Moor's enemy, Iago, determined on revenge because his commander gave another the office he desired, set himself deliberately to ruin husband and wife. He was cunning, he was plausible, he won the epithet *honest*, he simulated not only friendship but a sensitive regard for the welfare and honor of the Moor and so perfectly entrapped him that he made him a helpless victim. The murderer seems comparatively innocent before the cunning fiend, still he has no thought of excusing himself and dies by his own hand.

Lear is a drama without a hero. The place of the hero might be said to be taken by the doctrine of total depravity. Some have considered that the author's style reaches its highest point in this play. It has also been remarked that his power of combination, the ability to keep in hand a multitude of items and make them converge towards one point has here its best illustration. He brings forward an old story from pre-Christian England that had

been told in various forms and represented at times upon the stage. This he adopts, enlarges and adapts to his own purposes. The personages in the play are the king, in his second childhood, who has given over his power to his daughter,—three daughters, of whom one is disinherited because she would not flatter her father with a lie; two daughters who are ready to say anything to get their inheritance; their husbands; Kent, an old courtier who endures wanton abuses but remains true and dies in the service of the King; Gloster who confesses his past life is not wholly justifiable; his legitimate son, resourceful, versatile and true; his bastard son, who renounces all allegiance to kindred, to justice, to law and proclaims that nature is his goddess. Other characters need not be mentioned. The daughters in power give themselves over to every indulgence, disregard all contracts for maintaining the dignity of the old king, turn him out of doors and leave him to the pity of the disinherited daughter. The old king wanders about insane, is jeered by court clowns and fools, takes shelter in a cabin in a pelting storm and dies watching over the dying daughter that remained loyal. Gloster

loses both his eyes through his bastard son, who becomes intimate with the ruling powers. When all restraints are thrown off the daughters endowed with a kingdom, one of the sons-in-law and their retainers revel in unlimited excesses. Finally they fall to quarreling among themselves and like a coil of serpents bite and devour each other. Their brawls end in murder and suicide. One cannot but repeat the exclamation of the most righteous judge: "O ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Such scenes our author considers to be among the possibilities of humanity.

These tragedies are a most powerful expression of the terrific outcome of nature's forces doing their worst. They do not seem so much descriptions of individuals as of embodied energies. They remind us of the convulsions in nature when masses collide with Titanic force. They seem like riven ledges that grind upon each other and crush granite or marble blocks to powder. Yet they do not pass beyond the possibilities of human nature. They stand before the world the supreme assertion of what lies within man and may be realized in action.

In the survey of these tragedies it is worth while briefly to notice the place which Shakespeare occupies in history. He has been called a child of the renaissance. Europe had for two centuries at the time of his death been throwing off the burden of Medievalism,—scholasticism and feudalism,—and cherishing the classic culture of the older nations. For a century a reformation in religion had been in progress. For half a century Puritanism had been making itself felt in England. Shakespeare was not in sympathy with Puritanism, felt only incidentally the influence of the Reformation. But his works may be considered the culmination, the utmost efflorescence of the renaissance. The cherished thoughts and poetic art of Italy and France refined and purified entered into his works. We have in him the best of the renaissance. New and different forces entered into the later products of English literature.

What shall we say of these mighty dramas? No one can estimate their priceless worth as literature to be studied and absorbed. One element of their worth, however, seems to me their demonstration of the defects of the renaissance. It seems

to me that the mission of Shakespeare in serving his race was to show that culture, art, beauty cannot redeem the world. In whatever form presented, radiant with their own virtues, modeled after ancient civilization, cherished by the side of Christianity but not transformed by it, they are inadequate to the salvation of mankind. Shakespeare did nothing better for the world than to show that the time for Puritanism had come.

## LECTURE FIFTH





## V.

### SHAKESPEARE—RIPE MANHOOD

**E**VERY person who reaches mature age contracts habits. These taken in the fullest sense are the man himself. He is known as the combination of certain methods of conduct. He is the embodiment of certain holdings, for this is what habit means, and that which one holds,—holds at command and for service,—is that by which he impresses his fellow-men. These holdings may be natural endowments brought into service or they may be acquired forms of activity. Not only is habit second nature, but nature passes into habit and combines with acquirements that become spontaneously effective through practice.

Our topic now is, Shakespeare as the man of habits,—the man as known to the world through those characteristics that acted out themselves. We ask then,

How did he appear to his contemporaries? how did he impress them? His endowments, we may safely say, were much to his advantage. He was graceful in form and manners, winning in his address, com-

panionable among his fellows, able and ready to enter into the amusements of such company as he might be in. He abhorred quarreling, was inclined to forgive wrong rather than resent it. He was a master of ridicule and pungent wit, but these were brought into service against public wrongs and popular defects. He has left no trace of malice or desire of revenge. The adjectives gentle and sweet have come down to us from his companions as descriptive of his character, though there have been some charges, perhaps some indications, of jealousy and wounded ambition. With his delicate and refined nature he was very susceptible to influences from without. He had exquisite delight in music. Nature addressed him in manifold ways. The purple of the morning, the blaze of sunlight, the alternation of light and shadow, birds, the young of animals, flowers and trees brought to him their daily messages of cheer. His love of nature was inborn and developed by its own inherent energy, greatly fostered, however, by his early habits. He was not educated to the appreciation of rural scenes by plotted lawns and landscape gardening, but by the fields over which he roamed, by the woodlands

where he watched the birds, the habitants of hollow trees and the shy burrowers of the ground. He became familiar with the ways of the wild world by his own observations. His poetry puts in words what he saw with his own eyes. Until he was twenty years of age he must have lived in intimate converse, not with books that described the habits of the pigeon and the ground-hog, but with the animals themselves in their chosen haunts. In the *Venus* and *Adonis* he begins the description of the hunted hare thus:

“And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,  
“Mark the blind wretch, to overshoot his troubles  
“How he outruns the wind, and with what care —  
“He cranks and crosses, with a thousand doubles;  
“The many musits through which he goes  
“Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.”

The poet's minute observation of particulars is illustrated by the dialogue of Duncan with Banquo, wholly unconscious of the fate awaiting them.

Duncan says:

“This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
“Nimble and sweetly recommends itself  
“Unto our gentle senses.”

## Banquo responds:

“This guest of summer,  
“The temple-haunting martlet does approve.  
“By this loved maisonery, that the heaven’s breath  
“Smells wooingly here; no jutting, frieze, buttress,  
“Nor coigne of vantage, but this bird hath made  
“His pendent bed, and procreant cradle; where they  
“Most breed and haunt, I have observed, the air  
“Is delicate.”

Sir Joshua Reynolds remarks of this passage: “This short dialogue between Duncan and Banquo has always appeared to me a striking instance of what in painting is termed *repose*.”

He was equally susceptible to social influences and must have enjoyed the sodality of boon companions. The creator of Falstaff had certainly witnessed revelry and carousing. Brandes remarks that the hilarities in which he had part opened the way for some of the scenes in Henry V and Henry IV. “He drew the character of young English aristocrats under the names Mercutio, Benedek, Gratiano, Lorenzo, etc. These he had met and conversed with at such taverns as The Mitre, Boar’s Head, The Mermaid.” Such resorts were much patronized at that day. Brandes says: “There were never so many kinds of drink in England as in 1600.” I

do not believe, however, that Shakespeare was a gross inebriate. He was too dainty for that. There are notable passages in his works in which he deprecates the use of strong drinks. "O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hadst no name to be known by, let us call thee devil." "O, that men should put an enemy in their mouths, to steal away their brains, that we should with joy, revel, pleasure and applause transform ourselves into beasts." In *As You Like It* he makes Adam, boasting of his ability to do service in his advanced years, say:

"For in my youth I never did apply

"Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood."

Still it must be confessed that the signature to his will betrays a hand too shaky for a man of fifty-two years.

Shakespeare was attracted by beauty in all its forms and accordingly was very susceptible to feminine charms. He married, as has already been stated, when he was eighteen. This was a youthful lack of consideration for which he never forgave himself. But his penitence was not of the kind not to be repented of. The giddy indiscretion did not eliminate his sensitiveness to

later fascinations. Early in his appearance upon the stage he attracted the attention of some of the aristocratic theatre-goers, and, Brandes supposes, was invited to their houses where he met ladies of higher cultivation than he had before known. This acute critic and ardent admirer of his works says, that after this time he brought upon the stage women of a different type from those coarse and shrewish personages whom he had presented to the public. Raleigh, the acutest of Shakespearians, would deny any affinity of the dramatist with his coarse characters, says he was always at home with ladies of high birth, that he inherited this quality from his mother, who was of distinguished ancestry. Aside from stage representations and acquaintances in families that he visited he formed personal friendships with women whose captivating qualities excited his interest.

After speaking of the poet's sensibilities it is natural to speak of his intellect, but here we come to a pause. One does not know where to begin. His mind had such a roundness and smoothness that it is difficult to lay hold of it. It has no protuberances. We presume he might have been a

good mathematician, he certainly could count money, but there is nothing in his writings to suggest logarithms or conic sections. It is certain that he might have been an adept in the natural sciences, for he had a quick observant eye, but nothing indicates that the laboratory or the dissecting room would have attracted him early in the morning or retained him late at night. His ready use of terms familiar to the legal profession show that he might have attained eminence at the bar, but he detested the law's delay and the devices that turn awry the course of justice. He certainly might have been a great linguist for he surpasses all the word-mongers in his command of language, but he conformed to the rules of grammar only as was natural to him, and he had no pride in being a purist in his English. Scholastically he has no place in the arts of analysis and constructiveness, but in the work to which he gave himself, in reducing to its elements the matter in hand, and in arraying it in the fittest forms, he had no rival.

Without attempting to give a description of such a mind except in the most general way, I think we may say it was char-

acterized by perception and intuition. He knew just what he saw with the inner eye and the outer eye. Such a man must have resorted to reminiscence as a pastime and a confirmation of opinion, but I do not believe he enlarged his stock of knowledge or doctrine by reflection. Such a book as Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* would not have been specially congenial to him. He had his eyes open and saw all that was to be seen. He apprehended the inner workings of the soul and understood humanity to the bottom. We might say, he was the great reader and his book was creation. His own language is:

“This our life \* \* \*

“Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks,  
“Sermons in stones and good in every thing.”

On subtle metaphysical questions, such as the bondage of the will and freedom of the will, he would have sympathized with old Samuel Johnson, “We know we are free and there is the end of it.”

Shakespeare's eminence in creative imagination requires that this faculty should be somewhat more carefully noticed.

Of all our faculties this is the one most difficult to define. For all ages and na-



tions, as heathen superstitions testify, it is one of man's endowments. Yet imaginations can hardly be compared one with another. No one would think of arranging them in classes. There is, however, a certain quality belonging to the true poet's imagination which may be recognized as characteristic. It works mostly upon a low level and deals in practical affairs. There are imaginations that scale cerulean heights, range in lofty regions where common minds are not at home. It may be that true poets indulge in such flights, but they are not poets of the highest order, nor is their best work connected with fantastic, trackless movements. The true poet is a maker, a creator. He deals with plain things, if not themselves real he makes them real. He materializes the items that belong to his own ideal world; if I may coin a word, he matterizes the things he calls into existence for his own use. True poets cling close to nature; if they create a new world it borders on the old world and is explained by it. Keats and Shelley were undoubtedly true poets, but are really known only to a few kindred spirits. On the other hand Burns is appreciated by all who read him; the reader needs no inter-

preter. Wordsworth carries well-understood earthly energies into an intellectual world. Browning never leaves this world, though he often writes as if he had discovered new dimensions in it.

Of all men Shakespeare worked most easily and naturally through the imagination. He could transform an idea into an earthly agent or create an earthly agent to carry out an idea; an Ariel or an Iago was equally within the range of his power and is made equally subject to our apprehension. There is never any straining, any struggle to outreach or overtop nature. All he does is done here and now; for all that he proposes to do the means and the power are at hand. His ghosts stalk before us in visible form, and vanish not because of their nature but because they are no longer needed. His witches have a fire and cauldron to boil their broth, his fairies have a king and queen to keep them in order. Sycorax, Ariel, Caliban do their work as naturally as if produced by nature's processes. His caricatures of humanity, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, Quince and Starveling all work together to carry out an appointed part of a drama. The capacity of realizing the products of the imagination

gives this poet his highest power. When we consider that the characters which he presented as the product of his invention seemed to flow as freely as water from a fountain, and that they were selections from a world teeming with thoughts that live, our poet seems almost a master not of the actual only but of the possible also.

Shakespeare set a high value on an honorable position in the world. He might be said to have been an ambitious man, but this would not cover the entire case. He had aspirations for a high and dignified position in society. He was not satisfied with the station to which he was born, nor with that which he was obliged to accept in order to earn a living. His talents and genial personal qualities attracted the attention of some who were born to wealth and high station, and he could not but wish he were of them. It was a source of mortification that he was obliged to do hard work in a theatre and appear in city and country as a stage-actor, do humble work, as the modern phrase is, to make a little money. I think this idea of his character may be fairly inferred from the sonnets.

His native pride is shown in that he held the populace in a certain degree of con-

tempt. There is evidence that he deplored their sufferings, pitied them in their sorrows, but he exhibits little appreciation of their substantial worth, none of the confidence of many modern politicians in the soundness of their mature and settled judgment. He despised the literary taste of the groundlings, however much he might have sought their applause in his theatrical exhibitions. He was disgusted with their sweaty nightcaps and detested the "common cry of curs" as it was heard in the howlings of the mob. In *Troilus and Cressida* he turns aside from the course of the drama to express his estimate of *degrees*, by which he means distinctions between high and low in society. He makes Ulysses say:

"The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre  
 "Observe degree, priority and place,  
 "Insistence, course, proportion, season, form,  
 "Office and custom, all in line of order,  
 "And therefore is the glorious planet, Sol,  
 "In noble eminence enthroned and sphered  
 "Amidst the other \* \* \*

"But when the planets  
 "In evil mixture, to disorder wander,  
 "What plagues, and what portents? what mutiny?  
 "What ragings of the sea? Shaking of earth?  
 "Commotion in the winds? Frights, changes, horrors  
 "Divert and crack, rend and deracinate  
 "The unity and married calm of States

“Quite from their fixtures. O where degree is shaken  
“Which is the ladder of all high designs,  
“The enterprise is sick.”  
“Take but degree away, untune the string  
“And hark, what discord follows! Each thing meets  
“In mere appugnancy.  
“Then everything includes itself in power,  
“Power into will, will into appetite;  
“And appetite an universal wolf,  
“So doubly seconded with will and power,  
“Must make perforce an universal prey  
“And last eat up itself.”

The psychologic summing up of this drift toward chaos is worthy of notice;—law absorbed by power, power absorbed by will, will reduced to appetite.

Shakespeare determined to lift himself out of his low estate, be known as a gentleman possessed of lands, having a substantial home and a family bearing a badge of rank. At his prompting, no doubt, his father secured a coat of arms acknowledged by the public authorities. He maintained his home at Stratford all the time of his residence in London, supported his family, and must have assisted his father, supposed to have been in needy circumstances. He purchased lands in the vicinity, became owner of the best house in the town, and thus accumulated a fine estate to which he retired in his later years.

He was, however, defeated in his main purpose. His son, Hamnet, died in 1596, when the poet was at the height of his prosperity, and he, in the increasing soberness of age, with his more extended experience, saw that the supposedly fortunate classes had their trials also, had their peculiar dangers, were liable to sad defeats and deep disgraces.

I have often desired to sit down with Shakespeare, when he was off duty, to hear him talk of common things and tell how he felt about the little affairs going on in everyday life. I have wished that he might have had his Boswell, to tell us how the great man drank a glass of beer or blurted out an honest opinion about an absurdity. But the great poet is always enveloped in mist, it is only by inference that we get at the man. Still in his work are passages which he wrote because he could not help it, and some that he wrote *con amore*. These serve as windows to give a sight of the writer.

As has been noticed, he fell at times into a gloomy brooding over the ultimate destiny of humanity. Yet such-like themes had a kind of fascination for him. Who has not read the scene of the grave-diggers

spell-bound yet hastening to get through it? The minute descriptions of the body passing into dissolution which we meet in Claudio's speech and certain lamentations in the sonnets show that somber themes at times haunted his mind. Still more powerful was his fear of that which follows death. That gives the would-be suicide pause.

“The weariest and most loathed wordly life,  
 “That age, ach, penury, and imprisonment  
 “Can lay on nature, is a paradise  
 “To what we fear of death.”

These are poetic expressions but they occur too often to permit the supposition that he was not subject to depressing sentiments. There seems evidence that in his later years he rose in some degree above them, yet he never attained to the hopeful outlook of Doddridge:

“Fain would we leave this weary road  
 “And sleep in death to rest with God.”

Akin to this drift of mind was his habit of drawing dark scenes accompanied by presentiments and forebodings of evil. Hamlet, before his duel with Laertes, says:

“But thou wouldst not think, how ill all's here about my heart.”

Premonitions in Macbeth are thus described:

“The night has been unruly; where we lay,  
“Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,  
“Lamentings heard in th’ air; strange dreams of death,  
“And prophesying, with accents terrible,  
“Of dire combustion, with confused events,  
“New hatch’d to th’ woeful time. The obscure bird  
“Clamor’d the live-long night; some say, the earth  
“Was feverous, and did shake.

We would like to know what were Shakespeare’s sentiments in the milder ranges of experience. But we shall find few disclosures here. After he was twenty-one he lived for twenty-eight years in London and there is no evidence that he made domestic life prominent the little time he was in Stratford. We do not know what kind of a lodging-house he had in the city; but it does not seem to have fostered any admiration of home life. We look in vain for anything to correspond with Burns’ “Cotter’s Saturday Night,” or the strains of grief found in his address to “Mary in Heaven.” His love of order, social quiet, is manifest in various passages, eminently in his praise of *degree* already noticed, and again in the words of the wronged Beli-



sarius. Tempted to acts of vengeance he submits to his lot:

“And yet reverence,  
“(That angel of the world) doth make distinction  
“Of place ’tween high and low.”

He was a man of wide observation and saw that righteousness was the real basis of security.

“What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?  
“Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;  
“And he but naked, though locked up in steel,  
“Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.”

His observation reaching to high and low, to nobility and peasantry, led him, as he mused by the fireside, to thoughts like those of the Preacher:

“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

Macbeth comments thus on the death of his wife, the instigator and partner of his crimes:

“She should have died hereafter;  
“There would have been a time for such a word.  
“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
“Creep in this pretty pace from day to day,  
“To the last syllable of recorded time;  
“And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
“The way to dusty death.”

Isabel in *Measure for Measure* suffering under the rule of a usurper, says:

“O, but man, proud man!  
“Drest in a little brief authority;

“Most ignorant of what he’s most assured,  
“His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,  
“Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
“As makes the angels weep.”

The poet, bemoaning the degeneracy of the times when the young care for nothing but dress, makes the King of France commend his father for saying:

“Let me not live  
“After my flame lacks oil, to be the sniff  
“Of younger spirits, whose apprehensive senses  
“All but new things disdain; whose judgments are  
“Mere fathers of their garments.”

If life is appointed us in this fickle world the poet questions whether the peasant’s life is not on the whole the most desirable. He makes King Henry VI, another preacher of vanity of vanities, say:

“O God! Methinks, it were a happy life,  
“To be no better than a homely swain;  
“To sit upon a hill as I do now,  
“To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,  
“Thereby to see the minutes how they run.  
“And to conclude,—the Shepherds homely curds,  
“His cold thin drink out of a leather bottle,  
“His wonted sleep under a fresh tree’s shade,  
“All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,  
“Is far beyond a prince’s delicates,  
“His viands sparkling in a golden cup,  
“His body couched in a curious bed,  
“When care mistrust and treason wait on him.”

It is not to be maintained, of course, that the poet embraced all these sentiments in

practical life, but they occurred to him, they flitted across his mind in so many guises, and reappeared on so many occasions, that they must be accepted as indicating, to some extent, the current of his leisure thoughts.

Wit and humor are often spoken of together, but this is because they are often associated in actual life, not because they are akin. They play into each other, one opens the way for the other, yet they are different in essence. Wit is intellectual, humor emotional. Both abound in Shakespeare, but in attempting to discover the personal feelings of the poet, his spontaneous emotions, we consider his humor rather than his wit. The latter glitters in all his plays, flashes and subsides, while humor abides, fosters itself and works like leaven. We ask now, not how the poet's humor amused an audience, its service in dramatic displays is to be noticed by the critic of the dramas, here we desire to ask, how did he divert himself? How did this man, subject to deep depressions, sometimes falling into ways which he disapproved, throw off his somberness, his melancholy reminiscences and restore his spirits to their native buoyancy? How did he,

severed from family ties, much a solitary, devise for himself pastimes? We know that he had favorite tavern resorts, and met boon companions in gay festivities. I suspect also that he witnessed hilarities that were more rude than the pleasing conversation of gentlemen sipping their wine. Men who were his compeers, were involved in brawls; Marlowe was killed in a quarrel at the age of twenty-nine; Jonson, famous for wit encounters, fought a duel and was imprisoned. Shakespeare had seen drunken men claiming to be sober, he heard the drivel of men who had lost their senses and had undoubtedly laughed at the antics of revellers till the tears ran down his cheeks. Falstaff's swagger was not evolved from the inner consciousness of a man in his study. That wag, ridiculing the pretended honor of a poltroon, says: "Why, thou unconfinable baseness, it is as much as I can do, to keep the terms of my honor precise. I, I, I myself sometimes, leaving the fear of heaven on the left hand, and hiding mine honor in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge, and to lurch." Some of our author's pictures are redeemed only by their supreme ludicrousness.

It might be expected that so sensitive a man would at times be annoyed, and with all his natural gentleness give way to impatience. Perhaps we have no direct proof of this, but he is believed to have had several lawsuits on his hands when he died, and he puts into the mouth of Hotspur, for whom he had a kind of liking, these words which seem to me to have something of a home-born smack:

“I’ll give thrice so much land  
 “To any well-deserving friend;  
 “But in the way of bargain, mark ye me,  
 “I’ll cavil on the ninth part of a hair.”

Hotspur, impatient with Glendower, says of him:

“I tell you what;—  
 “He held me, but last night; at least nine hours,  
 “In reckoning up the several devils’ names,  
 “That were his lackeys;  
 “But marked him not a word. Oh he as tedious  
 “As a tired horse, a railing wife;  
 “Worse than a smoky house;—I had rather live  
 “With cheese and garlic, in a windmill, far,  
 “Than feel on cates, and have him talk to me,  
 “In any summer house in Christendom.”

Shakespeare shows his soundheartedness and thorough manliness, as much as anywhere, in his affection for England. He entertained a kind of Hebrew devotion

to his native soil. There is something touching in the Jew's remembrance of the land given to Abraham. That spirit was infused from above. It is recorded in Leviticus, that when God promises to remember his covenant with the patriarchs, he adds: "And I will remember the land." This kindred sentiment of the poet is expressed several times. I cite a few lines from the majestic words of the dying Gaunt mourning over the degeneracy of the times.

"This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,  
"Dear for her reputation through the world.  
"Is now leased out (I die pronouncing it),  
"Like to a tenement, or a pelting farm;  
"England bound in by the triumphant sea,  
"Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege  
"Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,  
"With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds;  
"That England that was wont to conquer others,  
"Hath made a shameful conquest of itself;  
"O, would the scandal vanish with my life,  
"How happy then were my ensuing death!"

The poet does not seem to have given much time to a contemplation of Deity. Of the divine attributes he gave the greatest emphasis to mercy. He believed that all men had need of it. There is no doubt that he coincided with the assertion of Isabella: that all souls were forfeit once. He had no

thought of being himself saved by works. He claimed to be indifferent honest, but remorsefully confessed to debasing sins. Of mercy he says, comparing it to the highest earthly power:

“But mercy is above this scepter’d sway,  
“It is enthroned in the hearts of kings.  
“It is an attribute of God Himself  
“And earthly power doth then show likest God’s  
“When mercy seasons justice.”

I suspect our author’s sympathies were with seasoned justice rather than pure justice. His fellowship was with those that called for mercy rather than those who were self-sufficient. We can hardly deny that this is akin to humanity. The prodigal son wakens more interest than the elder son to whom the father said: “all I have is thine.” And we have high authority for saying: “Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

Shakespeare probably prolonged his respites in Stratford in his later years, and was there permanently after 1613. It is supposed that he wrote his great tragedies there. In 1611 he sold his shares in the Globe Theatre, two years later he wrote

his last play, *The Tempest*. It is supposed that he took leave of dramatic composition at that time in the words of Prospero, as he formally renounced his magic art.

“But this rough magic  
“I here abjure, and when I have required  
“Some heavenly music (which even now I do)  
“To work mine end upon their senses, that  
“This airy charm is for, I’ll break my staff,  
“Bury it certain fathoms in the earth.  
“And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,  
“I’ll drown my book.”

After this date he lived a retired country gentleman, in his native town, in the home he had fitted up for himself. His style of living was generous. His expenses were considered large by his fellow-citizens. How agreeable the circumstances of his retirement were is not definitely known. It has been inferred from the form of his will that his wife was not treated with great consideration. She was, however, abundantly provided for by her legal claims upon his estate. His family was inclined to Puritanism, a scheme distasteful to him. It seems certain, however, that he was honored and cherished in his own family. His daughter, Susannah, honorably married, is believed to have been a woman of force



and character, having inherited something of her father's business shrewdness. A mind like his, a man with his history, could not have been without resources for diversion and meditation in a secluded life. His closing years of uninterrupted stay at Stratford could not have been without their enjoyment. On February 10, 1616, his daughter Judith was married. There is a tradition that Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton were his guests on that occasion and that a too free festivity brought on a disease that proved fatal. There is not much credit given to this tradition, but he did not long survive the event. He signed his will on the twenty-fifth day of the following month, March, and died on the twenty-third of April. He was buried in the church near at hand, and the bust, said by his daughter to be a good likeness, soon after placed over the grave, is still to be seen.

Of the personal religious views of Shakespeare nothing is definitely known. Intimations of various kinds may be gathered from his writings, but these were thrown in mainly for poetical effect. In his last drama, expressive of the restful calm of his later life, he says: alluding to

the fairy displays that had appeared and vanished:

“We are such stuff

“As dreams are made of, and our little life

“Is rounded with a sleep.”

Did he mean that the Almighty brings us into existence to play out our seeming life and then sink back into nothingness? or was this utterance the culmination of his own poetic play? I suppose the question can never be answered, but I think the current sentiment of his writings implies that:

“Life is real! Life is earnest!

“And the grave is not its goal.”

















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